

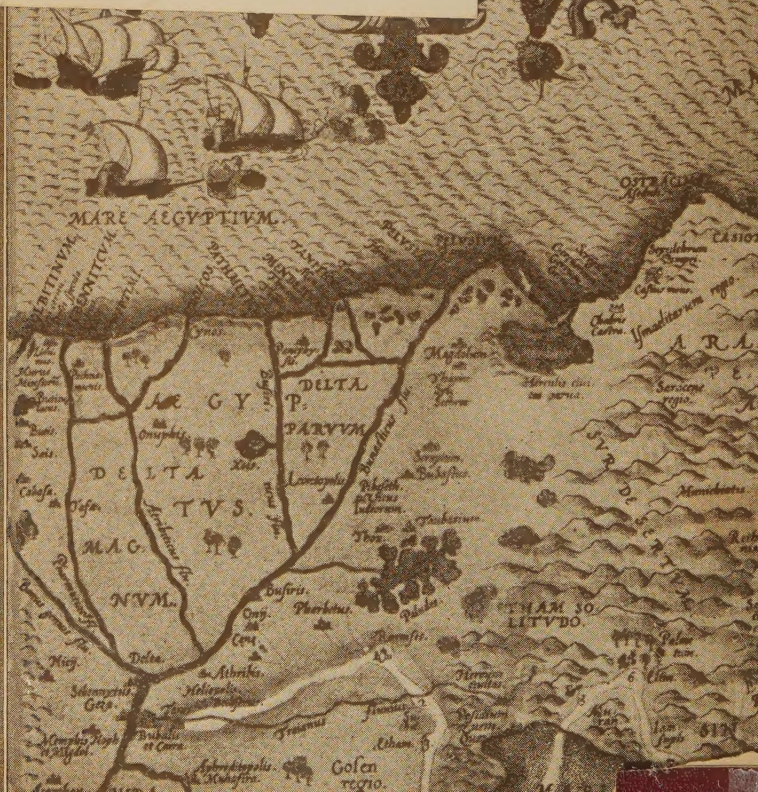
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The
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THE STUDY BIBLE

Editor JOHN STIRLING

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

*A Little Library
of Exposition*

with

New Studies

by

H. H. Newson.

THE BISHOP OF DURHAM
H. WHEELER ROBINSON, D.D.

Principal of Regent's Park College, London

W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

Principal of Handsworth College, Birmingham

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TO THE READER OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS

To get at the meaning of these great books it is better not to read them in the first place with the object of discovering what particular contribution they each make to the development of religious knowledge, but with the simple intention of making the acquaintance of the prophets themselves ; for these great men in their personal lives are as much revelations of God as the messages they were called to deliver. To know them personally is the readiest way to the heart of their teaching. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are introduced to us as men of history, not masters of theology ; as companions with us in the battle of life, not as the compilers of a book of religion. Whoever would learn of them must live with them, for it is only in such fellowship that God's word to men can be shared, and the Divine Revelation of the glories of the heavenly promises can be fully understood.

In this little volume the circle of friendship formed by the prophets is widened to include those who through fellowship with these messengers of God have become their interpreters ; those who, in many lands and in different centuries, have sought to discover in this group of noble men the message of God for all ages and all people. Their studies illuminate the prophets' words, and have been used in the following pages to make clear the meaning of the prophetic books.

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An Appreciation

THE MODERN MESSAGE OF THE
PROPHETS

BY
THE BISHOP OF DURHAM

THE
FIRST
STUDY

The Rt. Rev. H. Hensley Henson, D.D., is the Bishop of Durham. From 1918 to 1920 he was the Bishop of Hereford. His writings include: *Godly Union and Concord*, *The Value of the Bible*, *The Creed in the Pulpit*, *Puritanism in England*, *Christian Liberty*, *Anglicanism*, *Church and Parson*.

THE MODERN MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

BY THE BISHOP OF DURHAM

RELIGION is, on any showing, the most important of the forces which have shaped the development of man's character and determined the course of his history. Even now, in our secularised Christendom, when it might seem that religion has been largely thrust aside by other factors, it remains a formidable and incalculable power, which philosophers cannot ignore, and which statesmen can only neglect at their peril. It is matter of general agreement that religion finds its highest expression in the literature of ancient Israel. If we accept the convenient and (within limits) reasonable view that the several races of mankind have fulfilled distinctive rôles in the drama of human history, we cannot be mistaken in attributing to the Semitic race, and therein pre-eminently to Israel, the sublime rôle of spiritual teacher. In the religious literature of antiquity the Old Testament (which practically includes the entire extant literature of the ancient Jewish people) holds an unchallengeable primacy. We may say that the Old Testament contains the spiritual classics of the world. This fact alone should suffice to clothe the Old Testament with supreme interest, and to commend it by a secure title to the study of thoughtful men. Within this varied literature, belonging to many periods of the national history and reflecting different stages of religious development, the writings of the Prophets hold the principal place, and, of these writings, the compositions of the four prophets who are distinguished as "the Greater" are incomparably the best.

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Moreover, Christianity is really unintelligible apart from the older Jewish religion out of which it grew. The teaching of Jesus stands in line with the teaching of the Prophets, which it assumes and completes ; and Jesus Himself realises the Prophetic Ideal, and provides the key to that unique spiritual development which clothes the history of Israel with supreme significance for mankind. For Christians, therefore, it might well seem superfluous to offer reasons why they should concern themselves with the Prophets ; and yet there are evident signs that within the modern Church the tendency exists, and is perhaps gathering strength, to emphasise the distinction between the Jewish and Christian Testaments (which together make up the Canon of Scripture) so strongly as to endanger the spiritual authority of the Old Testament, and even to encourage its total repudiation. Yet the Christian Church received the Old Testament from the Divine Founder and His Apostles, who had no other Bible, and who certainly regarded it as containing the inspired oracles of God. It might well seem an incredible thing that Christians should ever think themselves competent to revise an estimate thus authenticated, nor could such a revision ground itself on the New Testament, which it would seem to magnify, for the New Testament is saturated with the Old, and depends on it so plainly that every belittlement of the older scriptures must needs impair its own spiritual credit. The relations of the two Testaments, as together containing the record of the self-revelation of God made to Israel through the Prophets, which culminated in the Incarnation, are sufficiently declared in the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews : “ God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by

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divers persons and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son."

Few English people have any knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, but in the Authorised Version of the sacred writings they have something more than a mere translation. Whether it be, as some authorities maintain, that there is a congruity between the Hebrew and the English languages, which makes the one a uniquely adequate vehicle for expressing the other, or whether it be rather that the translation of the Old Testament into the English vernacular chanced to be made precisely at the time when the English language was most suitable for the purpose, and by men who were incomparable masters of their mother-tongue, the fact is unquestioned that the Authorised Version of the Bible has become an English classic, so that its general neglect could not but tell adversely on the literary taste and habit of the people. That this danger is neither small nor remote appears to be certain. On all sides evidence is accumulating of the lack of acquaintance with the English Bible which marks the present generation of Englishmen. Teachers of literature lament it. Religious teachers of every description are embarrassed and alarmed by the neglect which has befallen the sacred volume which is their principal instrument. It appears to be the case that an increasing number of modern Englishmen have decided that they have no apparent or considerable interest in the Prophets of Israel. This conclusion cannot be denied the advantage of a certain plausibility, for the Prophets belonged to an alien race, a remote antiquity, and a social system which has long vanished from the earth. What relevance, it may well be asked, can their writings have to the modern world? Who were the Prophets?

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Why should their writings be clothed with permanent value ?

Undoubtedly a great change has passed over the estimate of the Hebrew Prophets under the influence of Biblical criticism, but this change, so far from destroying their relevance to modern life, has made it apparent. The traditional view fastened on prediction as the characteristic feature of the prophet's ministry, and thus clothed him with the isolating dignity of the miraculous. In the famous phrase of Bishop Butler, "prophecy was nothing but the history of events before they come to pass." It followed naturally that the argument from the fulfilment of prophecy held a principal place in Christian apologetics. Nor even yet has it been abandoned, though it is no longer insisted upon. But modern Biblical criticism has reduced prediction to very small proportions, and interpreted the prophetic ministry in ancient Israel more naturally. Nearly all the supposed predictions have been shown to be no predictions at all, but to have relation to contemporary politics. The late Archbishop Bernard's commentary on Bishop Butler's phrase is worth quoting :

"This is far too narrow a definition. Prediction is by no means the only function of the prophet ; even more than they were *seers*, the Hebrew prophets were moral teachers, preachers of righteousness. They not only foresaw the future ; they gave counsel for the present. And, again, it was counted part of their province to record the past. The schools of the prophets supplied the civil *historians* of Judæa ; and the Jews still classify under ' the prophets ' such books as Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.

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But their most conspicuous office was that of *preacher*. And, in fact, the larger sense of the word *prophecy* in English, as including more than prediction, has not been quite lost. Bacon describes the exposition of Scripture as ‘an exercise commonly called prophesying’; and the titles of Jeremy Taylor’s treatise *On the Liberty of Prophesying* and of Newman’s *On the Prophetic Office of the Church* are familiar. The word ‘prophecy’ connotes not only prediction, but exposition and moral instruction.”

The Puritan preachers, when they claimed to be standing in the succession of the Hebrew Prophets, were not without strong justification, for they were fulfilling in seventeenth-century England a ministry very similar to that which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the rest of the “goodly fellowship” fulfilled towards their contemporaries, though it must be admitted that the claim to the prophetic character was often discredited by ignorance, conceit, and fanaticism. Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were genuine “preachers of righteousness,” and so far they may properly be called “prophets.” In *Paradise Regained* Milton represents the Son of Man as answering the Tempter’s exaltation of Paganism by insisting on the superior merits of the Hebrew Prophets :

“ Their orators thou then extoll’st, as those
The top of eloquence : statists indeed,
And lovers of their country, as may seem ;
But herein to our prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government,
In their majestic unaffected style,
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so ;
What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat :
These only with our law best form a king.”

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While, however, we thus extend our conception of the prophet to include familiar ministries of our own time, we may never forget that, over and above these, the Prophets of Israel fulfilled a function in the religious development of the race which is both sublime and unique. Here they had no parallels, and could have no successors. Prophecy is the original element in Jewish religion, and its character was gradually disclosed. Beginning in rudimentary forms belonging to the common stock of human religion, prophecy advanced to a loftier character which has no true equivalent outside the history of Israel.

“The lower prophecy had its function and its place; but by the Providence of God and by the guidance of His Spirit, only the products of the higher prophecy have come down to us in the shape of authoritative writings. Here again there is a ‘selection.’ If we put aside the Book of Daniel, which is not exactly a prophetic work in the same sense as the rest, and which had a different place assigned to it in the Jewish Canon, there can be no mistake as to the remainder of the books which fill this section of our Bibles. The three so-called Major Prophets and twelve Minor are the central representatives of Israel’s religion, the culmination of all religion before the coming of Christ.”¹

The exclusion of Daniel from the number of the Greater Prophets has, however, been counterbalanced by the recognition that the canonical Book of Isaiah is mainly the work, not of one prophet, but of two at least, so that we may still speak of *four* Major Prophets—Isaiah I, Jeremiah, Isaiah II, and Ezekiel. Daniel belongs to a later date (165 B.C.) and a different category,

¹ *Vide* Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 43.

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being indeed the supreme example of apocalyptic writing.

The two centuries (750-550 B.C.) within which these prophecies were delivered witnessed the extinction of Jewish independence. The little Kingdom of Judah was blotted out of the world's history. It had long been menaced by the rival ambitions of the more powerful States to the north and to the south. Its survival as a "buffer State" depended rather on the convenience of its mighty neighbours than on its own prowess. When the Babylonians overthrew the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605, the fate of the Jewish kingdom was determined. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple of Solomon. The Jews were carried away into captivity.

When the First Isaiah (chs. i.-xxxix.) fulfilled his ministry, the Kingdom of Judah was still an independent State. The prophet delivered his witness in a court and a capital. Jeremiah lived through the last disastrous years and the final catastrophe. The Second Isaiah (chs. xl.-lxvi.) and Ezekiel were exiles, who interpreted the national calamity, and sought to prepare the nation for a return to Palestine.

This variety of secular circumstances is reflected in the prophecies. The First Isaiah is mainly concerned with the national politics, which he holds closely to the national religion. He insists on the essential connection between religion and morality, and refuses to accept ritual in lieu of righteousness. Jeremiah is the prophet of judgment, who is led by affliction to rise above the traditional conception of religion as an affair of the State, and to realise the necessity of individual repentance and individual righteousness. Ezekiel renews this message, and adds the summons to a purified national

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life. The anonymous prophet whom we call the Second Isaiah preaches the sombre and searching truth of salvation through sacrifice, vicarious sacrifice. He strikes the deepest note of Hebrew prophecy, and comes nearest to the heart and conscience of Christendom. The famous fifty-third chapter is a Christian classic. "It looks as if it had been written beneath the Cross upon Golgotha" is Delitzsch's simple but sufficient comment. The penetrating spiritual insight of this prophet, his exquisite sympathy, exaltation of thought, and sustained sublimity of language establish his primacy among the prophets of Israel. In his writings the Old Testament reaches the level of the New.

The scale of modern communities is vastly greater than that of ancient. Hezekiah's kingdom was hardly larger than an English county. But size has little relation to intrinsic importance. The masters of political science, of philosophy, of art, proceeded from the tiny city-states of ancient Hellas. The petty republics of mediæval Italy wielded an influence wider far than that of the mightier kingdoms which oppressed them. The moral primacy of Israel does but illustrate a general law. In the petty kingdoms, of which Samaria and Jerusalem were the capitals, the Hebrew Prophets discerned what were the principles of stable social order, and learned the indivisible union of social harmony and moral soundness. These principles they grounded in religion, and this union they proclaimed with uncompromising insistence, often in the teeth of violent opposition.

They are the ideal social reformers. It is precisely their intense concern with the life of society, and their clear vision of the factors which must ultimately determine its quality and permanence, that make the

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Hebrew Prophets pre-eminently the teachers whom most of all our modern democratic world needs. They were not sentimentalists who mistook fine feelings for moral achievement. They would have agreed with Bishop Butler : " Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be : why then should we desire to be deceived ? " There is a moral robustness about their writings which makes the study of the prophecies a tonic of character. They spoke in terms of an idealising rapture of peace, and pictured its blessings to a war-cursed world, but they knew, and never suffered their contemporaries to forget, that the only guarantee of lasting peace was righteousness. They would make no terms with an established religion which could multiply services and elaborate ceremonies while it condoned flagitiousness in the private lives of the worshippers and acquiesced in social oppression. For religion was not to the Prophets, as it is to the Communists of Russia, " the opium of the people," but the very quickening principle of social reform, the surest guarantee of equitable relations between men. A sufficient illustration is the passage from the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, appropriately appointed to be read in the churches on Ash Wednesday.

" Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways : as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask of Me righteous ordinances, they delight to draw near unto God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not ? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ?

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Behold, in the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness : ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I have chosen ? the day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily : and thy righteousness shall go before thee ; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward."

The Prophets ever speak with intimate sympathy of the poor. It is no doubt true that the relatively simple society, to which they addressed themselves, was despotically governed, and had little of that keen sense of personal rights which marks the communities of Christendom. They were not confronted by the bewildering paradoxes of industrialism. Oppression presented itself to them in crude forms which the free modern democracies have long outgrown. But who that has any competent acquaintance with social life as it proceeds to-day in Europe and America can doubt that the lives of the working poor are heavily shadowed with hardship, and exposed in many ways to real oppression ? The slums of our great cities exhibit

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extremes of social disadvantage which have never been paralleled for degradation and misery. The gulf between the wealth and culture of the Few and the poverty and mental squalour of the Many was, perhaps, never more profound, and certainly never so bitterly resented. The Prophets, then, with their constant insistence on the duty of dealing justly with the poor, have a message very profitable for modern society. They would have held with Butler that "we should always look with mildness upon the behaviour of the poor," but they would have been as severe towards the corporate oppression which organised "Labour" inflicts on individuals as towards the self-indulgence and tyranny of "Capitalists."

The Book of Daniel, as has already been pointed out, ought not to be included among the works of the Prophets. It stands by itself. It is properly anonymous, and appears to have been written about the year 165 B.C. during the Maccabæan revolt against the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes. Most modern scholars agree in denying the historical character of the first part of the book, chs. i.—vi., and the predictive character of the last, chs. vii.—xii., and agree in regarding it as belonging to that description of apocalyptic composition which was so popular among the Jews of the period between the cessation of prophecy and the time of Christ. No part of the Old Testament has been more popular among Christians. The famous stories which fill the earlier chapters—Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the refusal of the three Jews to fall down and worship the image of gold which the king had set up on the plain of Dura and their miraculous rescue, the pride, downfall, and restoration of Nebuchadnezzar, the dramatic destruction of

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Belshazzar, and Daniel's fidelity in the lions' den—have nourished the faith and strengthened the courage of countless believers, who accepted them without question as narratives of fact.

Whether they will retain either their popularity or their morally stimulating power when they have to be read as edifying romances may, perhaps, be doubted. It is, however, certain that fiction may be made a moral instrument of great value. The *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Holy War* are examples which will occur immediately to English minds. We may remember that our Lord Himself adopted the method of parables as His normal manner of teaching. "Among the stories of Daniel those representing powers of divination have not been the favourites. They represented nothing in common experience. But the stories of religious faithfulness rewarded do summarise a whole mass of experiences which centre in the 'faithful witness' of Jesus Christ. So we can love these stories still, and teach them to our children as ever-memorable symbols of an unceasing experience of mankind that in the long run, in spite of all the seeming weakness of the cause of God and of righteousness, yet, at the last resort, 'great is truth and prevails.'"

The unconquerable conviction which underlies the apocalypses, of which the Book of Daniel is the noblest example, that the wrongs of earth shall hereafter be rectified and righteousness vindicated, was never more needed than in an age of scepticism and secularity.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Drawn from many
sources to illustrate
the great Texts and
Teaching of the Books

THE CHRISTIAN COMMENTATORS of the earlier centuries knew little Hebrew. When they interpreted the Old Testament they were dependent upon translations, and this may explain, in some measure, the different expositions found in their works. **JEROME** was an exception. From boyhood he had studied Hebrew from Jewish Christians, and as a result the grammatical parts of his comments are of more value than those of the other Fathers. This applies particularly to his exposition of the prophets.

The increase of philological study at the Renaissance awakened interest in the language of the Old Testament, and the Reformers, particularly **LUTHER**, insisted upon its importance in reaching a true understanding of the Divine Revelation. At the colleges he lectured on the prophets, comparing his own translations from the Hebrew with the renderings in the Greek and Latin versions. **CALVIN** too was a Hebrew scholar, not so comprehensive as Luther, but more careful in ascertaining the actual sense of the text, and more eager to point out its practical application.

After Luther and Calvin English intercourse with Biblical scholarship on the Continent was, for a time, very slender, but the study of the Old Testament by British preachers and theologians was pursued with zeal and evidence of considerable ability. To the interpretation of the Scriptures, and especially the prophets, **POCOCK** brought a remarkable knowledge of Oriental learning; **LIGHTFOOT** contributed an amazing store of Talmudic annotations; and **LOWTH** opened up the beauty of Hebrew literary forms. Later, a breath of mysticism from the Continent quickened the scholasticism and awakened a spirit of inquiry which gave a sense of freedom to Scriptural interpretation. Criticism developed, and with it a great advance in the knowledge of the Old Testament and a better understanding of the books of the prophets.

ISAIAH

GOD'S CHALLENGE

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear,
O earth, for the LORD hath
spoken.*

Isa. I. 2.

THE prophet, though he speaks in God's name, despairs of getting audience with the children of his people, so addresseth himself to the

heavens and the earth. Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this indifferent people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of earth their barrenness. Or, this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels and the inhabitants of the lower world ; let them judge between God and His people : can such an instance of ingratitude be found ? God will be justified when He speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare His righteousness.

M. HENRY.

He who speaks, speaks not only to Israel and Judah, but to the whole universe ; all things are His creatures and His witnesses. God summons His people to hear His voice in the presence of all creation, and declares in the presence of that great public auditory that all the miseries of the Hebrew nation (and of all mankind) are due to their own sins ; but He is ready to heal them.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

Isaiah's strong indictment of the Church of that day, contained in the first chapter, is one of the greatest sermons against a shallow ritualism that has ever been spoken. He gave a new clearness to the idea of " faith," and claimed that religion should be applied to social reform and national policy.

W. G. JORDAN.

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GOD'S INVITATION

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isa. I. 18.

IF you can reply against my judgment, or allege anything for your discharge, declare it now. I call your own conscience to be the judge and witness.—DIODATI.

Men might dye their souls this or that colour, but to make them white is God's work.

Compare the reproduction of the thought, with the added paradox, that it is the crimson "blood of the lamb" that makes white the redeemed (Rev. vii. 16).

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

It is not merely a change of state but a change of nature that is indicated.—J. PARKER.

The Lord was pleased to encourage them to draw near to Him, and come and reason with Him : not at the bar of His justice ; there is no reasoning with Him there ; but at the bar of His mercy, at the throne of grace.—J. GILL.

He has watched over us, till He can bear it no longer. He stoops down from His throne—lays aside the majesty of His glory—and His language becomes the language of the suitor. "Come"—God begins. "Come." This is the word He loves. He very seldom says to His people, "Go." You must be very careful to understand that it is not sin which keeps a man out of heaven—but it is that, being a sinner, he rejects salvation.—J. VAUGHAN.

God has a nitre of grace that can bring not only the redness of scarlet sins, but the blackness of deadly sins, into its native purity and whiteness again.—R. BAKER.

GOD'S PROMISE

It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isa. II. 2.

where Jehovah's merciful presence constantly abides, is to be the centre of religious unity to the world. It was an old belief in Eastern Asia that there was a mountain reaching from earth to heaven, on the summit of which was the dwelling of the gods. The prophet is, perhaps, alluding to this belief, which he recognises as true in substance, though attached by the heathen to a wrong locality.—T. K. CHEYNE.

Though despised by the world, in comparison with the lofty mountains of Basan, and other huge emblems of earthly power, the lowly hill of Zion, on which God's Church is built, will be exalted above them all. All nations shall flow together, with the eager and joyous streaming onwards of mighty rivers. Observe the evangelical paradox here. In the natural world rivers flow down from mountains ; but in the spiritual world the streams of nations are made by God's grace to run together upward to the mountain of God's Church.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

Whilst we see all other nations marching forward with gaze fixed upon the earth, and absorbed only in thoughts of their own power and temporal prosperity, Israel is seen, in history, advancing with hands ever

WHENEVER the latter days are mentioned in Scripture, the days of the Messiah are always meant.—

KIMCHI.

There is an implied contrast to Sinai, whence the earlier and more limited revelation proceeded. Mount Zion,

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outstretched towards a future good, distinctly contemplated, and the hope of which it boldly makes the principle and support of its existence.—F. GODET.

The prophet did not mean that Zion should be literally elevated, so as to surmount the towering eminences of Lebanon and Hermon ; but, as the religious rites of the heathen were commonly performed on high places, the exaltation of Zion prefigured the ascendancy of the true religion over all the forms of idolatry and superstition. But, further, as a “mountain” denoted, in the symbolical language of prophecy, a government or system, political or ecclesiastical, this prediction announced the future supremacy of the Church established on Mount Zion all over the world, and its acceptance amongst all people.—R. JAMIESON.

Duhm considers that this was the swan-song of the prophet, sung in his old age, not for the public, but for his disciples and the faithful few. This is a wonderfully attractive picture. Isaiah was no timid, shrinking spirit. The call to arms had in the past rung through his soul like the note of a trumpet ; he had often spoken with fierce enthusiasm of warlike deeds. But now he looks away to a peaceful future. Lifted, in blessing and prosperity, high above the nations, with the ancient promise fulfilled, Israel draws to itself and its God the wondering homage of all peoples. We cannot but marvel at the way in which, surrounded by so much that was discouraging and deadening in the external history, faith soared so high, and, as from the mountain tops, hailed the coming dawn.—W. J. MOULTON.

The Church can never grow to perfection until she embraces all nations ; for only so can she be truly Catholic in thought and holy in life.

G. A. DONALDSON.

THE CALL OF ISAIAH

*In the year that king Uzziah
died I saw the Lord.*

Isa. VI. 1.

HE who would minister with lifelike earnestness to men, must first go into the presence-chamber of the King of Kings. Earthly kings and patrons may die, but the Lord above ever lives, as the Upholder of His servants.

A. R. FAUSSET.

The young Isaiah was, or in vision seemed to be, in the court of the Temple. He stood at the gate of the porch, and gazed straight into the Holy Place, and into the Holy of Holies itself. All the intervening obstacles were removed. The great gates of cedar wood were thrown open, the many-coloured veil that hung before the innermost sanctuary was drawn aside, and deep within was a throne of a King, high and lifted up, towering as if into the sky. It was a sight and sound which the youthful Isaiah recognised at once as the intimation of Divinity. It was the revelation of the Divine Presence to him, as that of the Burning Bush to Moses, or of the Still Small Voice to Elijah—the inevitable prelude to a prophetic mission, couched in the form most congenial to his own character and situation. To him, the Royal Prophet of Jerusalem, this manifestation of royal splendour was the almost necessary vesture in which the spiritual truth was to be clothed.—DEAN STANLEY.

The ideas are taken from Eastern royalty ; the prophet could not represent the ineffable presence of God by any other than sensible and earthly images. The particular scenery of it is taken from the Temple.

BP. LOWTH.

There was deep harmony between the constitution

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and habits of the prophet's mind, and the character and form of the revelations he received. His imagination served for the warp to be crossed by the woof of inspired impulses covering it with patterns of manifold dyes.—J. STOUGHTON.

He saw the Lord. It is really just the transition from the religion of tradition to the religion of experience. Religion comes to us all first as a tradition. It is the tradition of our home, the tradition of our Church, the tradition of our country, and so on ; but as long as it is merely that, it is vague, unreal, and remote. But some day this God of whom we have heard is realised by us to be here. Now, this was what happened to Isaiah. He would not have expressed it in the same way in which we do, yet at bottom the experience in all ages is the same, and from that hour God was the most real thing in the world to this man. What he saw that day in a moment it took a whole lifetime to write out. Manifold as is the truth in the Book of Isaiah, it may all be deduced from these two things—the holiness of God and the omnipotence of God. This book can be compared to a grand and voluminous piece of music in which are combined the simple and the great, the beautiful and the terrible, but the ground-tones of the whole dominating and uniting the entire piece, and sounding out ever and anon are those two ideas that were united that day in the song of the seraphim.—J. STALKER.

Isaiah saw in transitory shadows that which we have received in a historic presence (Christ). By the Incarnation God has entered, and empowered us to feel that He has entered, into fellowship with humanity and men.

BP. HERBERT.

We all need the discipline, the inspiration of awe.

BP. WESTCOTT.

A SIGN OF THE LORD

And the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

Isa. VII. 10-12.

AHAZ was still a youth when he succeeded to the throne, and possessed neither the strength of character nor the political capacity to deal with the momentous questions of foreign policy which were raised. This weak, petulant, and unprincipled king was, however, not destitute of guidance. Beside the throne stood the commanding figure of the great patriot Isaiah, perhaps after Moses the most striking personality in Hebrew history.—R. L. OTTLEY.

In the early days of his ministry, while the memory of the Divine call was still fresh, the prophet met Ahaz terrified at the joint invasion of Judah by the Kings of Israel and Syria. Scornfully calling these rulers "the two fag-ends of smoking logs," all but burnt out, with no more power to hurt than a charred stick, he called on the descendant of David to trust in Jehovah alone. With hypocritical excuses the king put off the prophet, resolved already that in an Assyrian alliance alone lay any hope of deliverance. As Isaiah turned indignantly away there broke in upon his soul the great hope of a brighter future.—W. J. MOULTON.

The words of Ahaz, though they have a show of piety, proceeded really from despair.—W. LOWTH.

He refused to make trial of the indulgence proffered, not because he believed without it, but because he had no confidence in it, nor value for it.—DEAN STANHOPE.

The hour in which Isaiah parted from Ahaz gave to the world the thought of the Messiah.—KITTEL.

IMMANUEL

Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign ; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isa. VII. 14.

IT pleased God to afford the greatest and most comfortable sign of His mercy to the house of David in particular, and to all mankind in general : a sign (not indeed exactly in the sense of that which was offered and refused, ver. 11, an emblem, or proof of something to follow), but, as the word is taken to signify in both Old and New Testaments, a wonder, namely, the birth of Him in whom all God's mercies were to be summed up.—J. LIGHTFOOT.

“ Immanuel ” does not in itself imply that the child was regarded as God, but only that he was to be the pledge of the Divine presence, and endowed in a special sense with the spirit of Jehovah. The Incarnation “ fulfils ” such a prophecy, because Christ is the true realisation of the vague and half-understood longings of the world, both heathen and Jewish.—C. W. EMMET.

The New Testament fulfilment gave to this watchword of Isaiah an import incomparably loftier than that in which the prophet conceived it, but in essential consistency with his meaning.—G. G. FINDLAY.

They shall call his name Immanuel ; that is, God with us, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling Him Jesus, a Saviour, for if He had not been Immanuel, God with us, He could not have been Jesus, a Saviour. Here is a sign for you, not in the depth or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant, made with David, which you are no strangers to. Your land is Immanuel's land.—M. HENRY.

PRINCE OF PEACE

*For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given ; and
the government shall be upon
his shoulder : and his name
shall be called Wonderful,
Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace.*

Isa. IX. 6.

of God's people through whom its Divine character and office will at length be realised. To this great heir of the national destiny an unexampled designation is given : " Wonder of a counsellor, God of a hero, Father for evermore, Prince of peace." There are no marks of time attached to the prediction, such as were necessary in the case of the boy Immanuel ; only Isaiah knows that such a glorious ruler must and will be born for God's people.—G. G. FINDLAY.

To us this Child is born, to us a Son is given, a Child who shall be the justification and the consummation of all the long and weary story, a Son who is Himself the goal of our pilgrimage, the fulfilment of our imperfections, the crown of our endurance, the honour of our service, the glory of our building. God has a scheme, an issue prepared for which He worketh hitherto, and that issue is His Son. In Him all will be gathered in, and fulfilled. And in the power of this message we are told not to faint or fail.—SCOTT HOLLAND.

His government is not as the world's government ; and it is not as the world giveth that He giveth His peace.

A. PLUMMER.

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He mentions "shoulders," because great burdens are commonly laid upon men's shoulders ; and as all government, if it be rightly managed, so this especially, is a very heavy burden, requiring extraordinary care, and diligence, and self-denial. Possibly here may be also an allusion to the ancient custom of carrying the ensigns of government before the magistrate upon the shoulders of their officers ; or, as some say, to the cross of Christ, which was laid upon His shoulders, and which was the way to His kingdom or government. "His name shall be called" is not to be taken for a description of His proper name, by which He should be commonly called, but of His glorious nature and qualities. "Wonderful, counsellor," may be taken separately or jointly, which latter may seem to best agree with the following titles, each of which is made up of two words. Compare with Isa. xxviii. 29, where God is called "wonderful in counsel," which makes the title more full and emphatic. "The mighty God," the prevailing or conquering God, which can agree to no man but Christ, who was God as well as man, and to whom the title of God is given in both Testaments. "The everlasting Father," either as the One who was and is from everlasting to everlasting, or the Author of all things which are eternal, the Father of the eternities. "The Prince of Peace," who purchases and procures peace between God and men as well as between men and men, who brings peace to our consciences and leaves peace as a legacy to His followers.—M. POOLE.

He is "the Prince of Peace," not only as the author of peace, and the dispenser of peace, but also as the prince who rules by peace. His kingdom is orderly, every act of government being regulated by wisdom and goodness.—A. CLARKE.

THE ROD OF MINE ANGER

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

Isa. X. 12.

most tersely and clearly stated. Even the powerful Assyrians are but the rod of His wrath, whom He at once destroys on their presuming to become more than a mere tool in the hands of God. Pride, therefore, is the special sin of man, as when he arrogates to himself the honour and glory which belong to God alone.

C. H. CORNHILL.

While Ahaz, dazzled by the brightness of the Assyrian victories, paid homage to their gods, and sought to conciliate the masters of the world by servile imitation of their customs, Isaiah claimed that all their power was given to them by Jehovah for His own wise purposes. Assyria was His tool, the rod of His anger. For all its proud boasting and insolent violence it would some day have to answer to Him.—W. J. MOULTON.

The Assyrian's design was purely to extend his conquests, and gratify his own ambition; but God, who bringeth good out of evil, makes the wickedness of some nations the means of correcting that of others; and the worst of men, in the worst of their crimes, the undesigning instruments of His righteous purposes.

ABP. SECKER.

THE BRANCH OF JESSE

There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.

Isa. XI. 1.

MOST striking and instructive is the contrast between the downfall of Assyria, like a majestic cedar-forest felled by the woodman's axe, but felled to rise no more—for a cedar throws up no suckers—and the stem of Jesse, prostrate too, yet retaining its vitality, and sending up a feeble sucker, destined nevertheless to attain to universal empire. The word "rod" means a shoot growing not from the stem, but from the stock, or stump left in the ground, after a tree has been cut down. The word used for "branch" is a sucker springing up from the roots of a tree, and which may be transplanted, and grow into a tree, which a branch cannot do. Thus Christ, though David's son, is no mere continuation of the old order of things, but there is in Him a new beginning, and His kingdom has its own independent upgrowth and development.

R. P. SMITH.

Christ is (1) the *Root* of all our happiness ; the root, in which our very life is hid. The root (2) from which we are all but so many twigs, so many "branches" of this great Vine-root. The root (3) whence all good springs up to us, all flowers of art, of nature, all the "staves" of comfort, and "rods" of hope, all the branches of grace and glory : no name more proper to Him in all these respects. Why then say we, or why says the Prophet, *the root of Jesse*? Why? not without reason neither : Jesse was but a poor man in Israel ; yet from Jesse would God raise up Christ. He can raise empires out of sheep-cotes : so He did

Cyrus ; so He did Romulus—the one, the founder of the Persian monarchy ; the other, of the Roman. He raised the first Governor of the Jews out of a bulrush-basket, and the first states of the Christian Church out of a fisher-boat.—MARK FRANK.

He is called a rod and a branch ; both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a twig, and a sprig ; so some render them : such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God's Church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs (x. 33) which will not without great labour be hewn down ; but Christ to a tender branch, yet He shall be victorious over them. He is said to come out of Jesse, rather than David, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity ; his family was of small account, and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the "son of Jesse."—M. HENRY.

The "Rod," the "Branch of Jesse," the "righteous Branch of David," were the known titles of the Messiah, or Son of David. And it was His glory, while He lived upon earth, to make others, like Himself, "trees," or "plants of Righteousness." This expression, as it standeth here, joined with others plainly descriptive of evangelical benefits and comforts, unfoldeth to us the true nature of those wonders, which Isaiah foretold should be wrought in the wilderness, and which he hath represented under so rich a variety of poetical imagery ; such as streams of water, breaking forth in the deserts, causing them to blossom as the rose ; myrtles, coming up instead of briars ; cedars, pines, and olive-trees, instead of thorns. Here we behold a fruitful nursery of a new kind of plant, prepared for the celestial Paradise. These are men of humble, peaceable, contrite hearts.—BP. HORNE.

NATURE REDEEMED

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them.

Isa. XI. 6.

ISAIAH is drawing a picture of *redeemed nature*. I do not think that when Isaiah talks of bears and lions and reptiles, he means fierce and cruel and cunning men. When he talks of the beasts he means the beasts. . . . The ideal Ruler of David's line, on whom the Spirit of the Lord shall pour all His choicest intellectual gifts, shall found a kingdom of universal peace, gentleness, and confiding innocence. We are very near the heart of Christianity here.—W. R. INGE.

The tenderness of Francis of Assisi towards the animal creation was based on the noble conception of a redeemed world—a universe all pervaded by the sense of the Creator's presence and the Saviour's love. The visionaries of that rude age were as children full of sweet unspeakable fancies, and that strange power of inspiring the outside world with their own simple sublime fullness of thought and feeling which is the inheritance of babes. It is sometimes hard enough now to understand how a strong-hearted, unpitying, unloving, faithless man can yet be dearer to his Creator than an honest, patient, faithful, all-enduring animal, but in the time of Francis the wonder was still greater. It is evident Francis felt himself justified in addressing the spiritual consciousness of every living thing. He was their superior in the economy of Providence. They could not answer him in speech, but they could in obedience ; and God was the Father, the Preserver, the conscious Head of all.—MRS. OLIPHANT.

THE SONG OF SALVATION

The LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and song ; and he is become my salvation.

Isa. XII. 2.

THIS chapter is a hymn of praise, proper to be used in the triumphant state of the Church, described in the foregoing chapter.—BP. LOWTH.

The emperor is protected by his guards, and is safe ; mortal is shielded by mortal and feels secure ; the Immortal defends a mortal, and do you dare to tremble ? Who then are they that fall when they are thrust, save those who choose to be their own strength and song ? No man falls in a struggle, save he whose strength and praise fall with him. Wherefore, he whose strength and song is the Lord, can no more fall than the Lord Himself.—AUGUSTINE.

We may note in the use of these words part of the hymn of victory chanted by Moses at the Red Sea, we may use the words for our own, because the Lord is our strength, in that it is in His might, not our own, that we conquer ; He is our song, because we make Him the theme of our praise, and He suffers those of us who conquer to join in the song of Moses and the Lamb ; and He is our salvation, our Jesus.—J. M. NEALE.

With these words conclude the prophetic discourses on Immanuel. Through what obscurity of history have we not had to go, until we came to the bright light of the kingdom of God. How Israel and the nations had to pass through the fire of judgment before the sun arose in Israel and the entire Gentile world was illumined ! It is the same way every Christian has to travel.—WEBER.

He who has God for his strength will have Him for his song ; and he to whom Jehovah is salvation will exalt His name.—A. CLARKE.

THE SHADOW OF EGYPT

The shadow of Egypt.

Isa. XXX. 2.

SO we may go back through very many centuries and find in a bit of ancient history that which is repeating itself in the life of to-day. The national question among the Jews of Hezekiah's day was, How can we shake off the Assyrian yoke? And the popular solution of the problem was, Enter into an alliance with Egypt. True, Egypt was a land of many idols, but it was also a land of many horses and chariots, and full coffers. And there have always been those in the world who, when they have wanted chariots, have not been over-particular where they borrowed them. There have always been those who would fraternise with an idolater—provided he was a rich idolater. Egypt was powerful with that kind of power which the world and the devil fully appreciate. There is a might that calls to the world in the clang of iron and the thunder of horsemen and the clink of gold, and many there be that trust in it. There is a might that lifts not up its voice in the clamour of the world, but that pleads its rights and its power in the silences of thought, in the quiet inner place where conscience dwells, in the depths of all true feeling, and on the lonely heights of the ideal—and would to God that you and I had more faith in it. The choice between these two is ever before us. The great centres of power and industry, of learning and dominion, have shifted steadily westward. But the heart of the West to-day is as the heart of the East in many a dim yesterday, and the thing against which the Jewish prophet protested is the thing against which someone must protest still—even trust in the shadow of Egypt.—P. AINSWORTH.

THE DEFENDER OF JERUSALEM

Like as when the lion growleth and the young lion over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them : so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts protect Jerusalem ; he will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it.

Isa. XXXI. 4, 5.

THE similitude is noteworthy, as for its fullness and vividness, so also for the fact that the lion is made the symbol, not of destruction, but protection. As the king of beasts stands haughtily defiant over the prey which he has made his own against the shepherds who seek to rob him of it, so will Jehovah, in His character as the Lord of hosts, refuse to surrender Jerusalem, His peculiar possession, to the armies of the Assyrians. The picture that follows is, at least, not doubtful

in its meaning, whether it be meant as a counterpart or antithesis to that which precedes it. The eagles hovering over their nest, and scaring off man or beast that attacked their nestlings, supplied the most vivid image possible of protection.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Jerusalem, as the object of God's anger, shall not escape Him, or be wrested from Him, no matter how many Egypts may be summoned to thwart Him. The change of figure is common in Isaiah, and represents by the motion of a bird of prey what was before represented by a beast of prey. It is a picture to the very life. The strong-winged bird covers its quarry with its wings, and snatches it away ; passing over the heads of those that would frighten it from its prey, it gets off with it.—NAEGELSBACH.

A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST

A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Isa. XXXII. 2.

HE shall be the defence, protection, ease, and safeguard of all His people.

DIODATI.

This description is the more remarkable, because the chief sin, against which Israel is warned throughout these chapters, is, trusting in an arm of flesh. There is but one explanation. The Righteous King is Immanuel.

W. KAY.

I applaud a sufficient man, an officer equal to his office ; captains, ministers, senators. I like a master standing firm on legs of iron, well-born, rich, handsome, eloquent, loaded with advantages, drawing all men by fascination into tributaries and supporters of his power. Sword and staff, or talents sword-like and staff-like, carrying on the work of the world. A monarch, who gives a constitution to his people ; a pontiff, who preaches the equality of souls, and releases his servants from their barbarous homages ; an emperor, who can spare his empire.—EMERSON.

Some observe here that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from them that shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm Himself to keep it off from us.—M. HENRY.

These men were truly magistrates ;

These neither practised force nor forms ;

Nor did they leave the helm in storms :

And such as they make happy states.

BEN JONSON.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD

Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

Isa. XXXVI. 18.

IT was the foolish conceit of idolaters that each country and nation had its own proper deity, which it had pleased them to choose.—DIODATI.

Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, and he endeavoured, both by his own example and

by arguments, to persuade his people to do likewise; of this, Rabshakeh was sensible, and was more afraid of this than of anything else, and therefore laboured this point more than any other. He blasphemously set the Lord God of Israel upon a level with the fictitious gods of the Gentiles.—J. GILL.

Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightened him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God, the more Hezekiah studies to honour Him.—M. HENRY.

It was a day of awful suspense. Already there was a rumour that the king of Egypt was on his way to the rescue. The King of Assyria had heard the rumour, and it was this which precipitated his endeavour to intimidate Jerusalem into submission. The evening closed in on what seemed to be the devoted city. The morning dawned, and with the morning came the tidings from the camp at Libnah, that they were delivered. By whatever mode accomplished, whether by plague or tempest, the deliverance itself was complete and final. The Assyrian king at once returned. He was the last of the great Assyrian conquerors.—DEAN STANLEY.

COMFORT YE

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my
people, saith your God.*

Isa. XL. 1.

HITHERTO hath been the comminatory part of this prophecy : followeth now the consolatory. Here beginneth the gospel of the prophet Isaiah, and holdeth on to the end of the book.—J. TRAPP.

In a larger sense, this prophecy announces the message of comfort which was given to Jerusalem by the Messiah, who was called the Comforter by the Jews ; and was expected by the faithful, such as Simeon, who is described as waiting for the consolation of Israel. Her warfare was her forced service as in the hardships of a severe campaign. Such was Judah's condition at Babylon ; she was like a soldier and sentinel, compelled to keep watch on a dark winter's night, and to serve under the banner of a foe. The announcement that her "warfare" is "accomplished," or rather, that her "hard service is ended," is tantamount to a proclamation that she is freed from the bondage of Babylon by the overthrow of her enemies ; that the idols of Babylon have been destroyed, and that the nation of God is restored to liberty, and to its own home. The addition of the words "her iniquity" is "pardoned" shows that this announcement has also a spiritual sense ; and that this prophecy reaches forward to the proclamation of the Jubilee of the Gospel ; of which the proclamation of freedom by Cyrus was a type.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

Comfort, in the Bible, means "strengthening." The word has deteriorated of late. When God says "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," He calls His prophets to strengthen them, to arouse them.—D. T. YOUNG.

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

*To whom then will ye liken
God?*

Isa. XL. 18.

HERE begins a lofty description of God's Almighty power, showing that He is great above all His

works, and able to do beyond what we can think or conceive ; the design of it is, to persuade the people to put their whole trust in Him, to rest assured that He is able to perform His promises.

The design of the prophet's argument is to show the absurdity of setting up images as the resemblances of God, for nothing is a greater dishonour to God than to suppose Him to be like the image of a corruptible creature. For this reason the author of the Book of Wisdom makes the worship of images more inexcusable than the worship of the heavenly bodies, or of the elements, because these are worshipped for their own sakes, those upon the account of their representation.

BP. LOWTH.

The final distinction between God and the creature is, not His illimitable power and wisdom, but His absolute and essential holiness.—W. KAY.

Note the contrast between the image that has to be chained up, or the wooden log that requires care that "it be not moved," and the majestic throne of Deity.

R. P. SMITH.

That great universal war which alone makes up the true History of the World—the war of Belief against Unbelief ! The struggle of men intent on the real essence of things, against men intent on the semblances and forms of things.—CARLYLE.

Kuma forbade the Romans to represent the deity in the form either of man or beast.—PLUTARCH.

WAITING UPON THE LORD

*They that wait upon the LORD
shall renew their strength.*

Isa. XL. 31.

“THEY shall put forth fresh feathers like the moulting eagle.” It has been a common and popular opinion, that the eagle lives and retains his vigour to a great age ; and that, beyond the common lot of other birds, he moults in his old age, and renews his feathers, and with them his youth. Whether the notion of the eagle’s renewing his youth is in any degree well founded or not, I need not inquire : it is enough for a poet, whether sacred or profane, to have the authority of popular opinion to support an image introduced for illustration or ornament.—BP. LOWTH.

Water will revive a withering, but not a withered plant ; wine will revive a dying, but not a dead man ; the breeze of heaven will rekindle the smouldering coal, but not the cold, grey ashes of the hearth. And it is only spiritual life that can derive benefit from such ordinances as are intended to revive the faint and give strength to the weary.—T. GUTHRIE.

The poor beggar, that needs alms from the king, goes to the king’s highway, where he passes ; and surely he is nearer his purpose than if he should go to the top of a mountain, where the king never comes ; so, be you still in the use of means, in the Lord’s way.—R. ERSKINE.

There is one thing more beautiful than an enthusiastic young Christian, and that is a faithful *old* Christian. It is a glad sight to see the young pilgrim entering with enthusiasm upon his course, stripping with eager hopefulness for the race. But it is a still more beautiful sight to see an old man still pressing towards the mark.—J. D. JONES.

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.

Isa. XLII. 1.

ALLUDING to the custom of kings leaning on the arm of their most beloved and faithful servant.

A. CLARKE.

The person of whom he here speaketh is by some supposed to be Cyrus, and by others Isaiah himself, and by others the people of the Jews. But the most and best interpreters understand this place of Christ. Moreover, this place is expressly interpreted of Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel ; and to Him, and to Him only, all the particulars here following do truly and evidently belong. "Whom I uphold" means, whom I will assist and enable to do and suffer all those things which belong to His office. He is chosen by Me to this great work. The word "delighteth" is oft rendered "is well-pleased," for I "have put My spirit upon Him," and He shall bring to light what before was hid in the Father's bosom. "Judgment" is an ambiguous word, and elsewhere is put for punishment, which cannot be meant here, because the whole context speaks of His mercy and sweetness, and not of His severity ; but here it is put for God's law, for the great things which Christ published unto the world, both Jews and Gentiles, were nothing else but the law and will and counsel of God.—M. POOLE.

His methods should be purely inward and spiritual. It is implied that He might, if He would, enforce obedience ; but that in His Divine condescension He waives His right, and limits Himself to persuasion.—CHEYNE.

We believe that here there dawned upon the mind of the prophet the vision of the only type of Servant who could truly perform God's commission. At first, in the glow of hope which filled him at the news of the victories of Cyrus, he saw no interval between promise and achievement. It was God's work, and His chosen people could not fail. Then he turned back to actualities, and saw that his fellow countrymen were altogether unprepared, blind and deaf and stubborn and hopeless. What can possibly bridge the gap between the ideal future and the present weakness? The answer appears to be given in the Servant passages. There is to come One who shall begin a work not by clamour and self-assertion, but by the silent influences of the spirit (xlii. 1-4). For this work He has been prepared in secret by Jehovah, kept until the fullness of time was come (xlix.). In His work, when once begun, though daily taught by God, He must endure shame and reproach; yet even that shall not overturn His faith (l. 4-9). Then the prophet sounds a deeper note, and shows the Servant laden with unheard-of sorrows, given over, a guiltless victim, to an unjust death. At this awful tragedy contrition and penitence seize all beholders. They become conscious that all has been done for their sakes. Then, finally, the Servant, restored in glory, sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied, since the fruit of His sorrows is a great and glorious influence in the world.—W. J. MOULTON.

Here is a new and unheard-of heroism. Here is a heroism whose strength consists in the power to suffer; which claims to be divine on the ground not of breaking but of being broken, not of bruising but of being bruised. Ring in the age when we shall measure our strength by our capacity for endurance.—G. MATHESON.

THE ADVENT OF HOPE

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.

Isa. LII. 7.

AN expression highly poetical, for "how welcome is his arrival! how agreeable are the tidings which he brings!" The watchmen

discover afar off on the mountains the messenger with the much-wished-for news of the deliverance from Babylon; and immediately spread the joyful tidings.

BP. LOWTH.

It is not said, "How lovely are the messengers," but, "How beautiful are their *feet*!" Not what they are in themselves, but what they *bring*, as *sent* from God, and *running* in obedience to Him, is here presented to the view.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

It could not be said, Beautiful are the feet of them that bring peace, if the feet had nothing to do with this business. With sitting and wishing, it will not be had. Peace will hide itself (Ps. xxxiv. 14); it must be sought out; it will fly away; it must be pursued. We see Christ; He showeth His hands, and His feet, to show what must be done with both for it.—BP. ANDREWES.

If the *feet* of them that preach peace be beautiful—(and "Oh, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach peace?" the prophet asks the question; and the prophet Nahum asks it; and the Apostle Paul asks it: they all ask it, but none answer it)—who shall answer us, if we ask, How beautiful is the *face* of Him who is the Author of this peace, when we shall see that in the glory of Heaven, the centre of all true peace?—DONNE.

The prophet Isaiah spake of them that foretold of the delivery of Israel out of the Babylonish Captivity.

BP. HACKETT.

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

*Surely he hath borne our
griefs, and carried our sor-
rows.*

Isa. LIII. 4.

IT must needs be that the prophet, when he wrote these things, was endued with a very great spirit; because herein he so clearly setteth forth the Lord Christ in His twofold estate of humiliation and exaltation, that whereas other oracles of the Old Testament borrow light from the New, this chapter lendeth light to the New in several places.—J. TRAPP.

This chapter reads more like a history than a prophecy; and might with more reason be suspected to be a copy drawn from His life than an early forecast of it. But this Scripture was in being long before our Lord was born, and was in the keeping of His enemies; of those who hated and despised Him, and at last put Him to a shameful death.—BP. SHERLOCK.

It has been maintained that we have here an ideal picture of the righteous Israel in its relation to the rest of the world and to God. But I suppose that this solution would generally be admitted to be a failure, and that the wonderful picture of the Suffering Servant of God in this great chapter would generally be recognised as a portrait of an individual. If it be that, there is only one Individual in history of whom it is a likeness. The life and death of Jesus Christ—lived and died five hundred years after the very latest date to which anyone has assigned this prophecy—fit it feature by feature, tint by tint, as nothing else can. And the minute external correspondences between the prophet's vision and the gospel story, important as these literal resemblances are, are mainly important as pointing onwards to the complete correspondence between the spirit and

functions of the Suffering Servant of the prophecy and of the Jesus Christ of the gospel history.—A. MACLAREN.

Here the type of the sacrificial blood, which was previously dumb, begins to speak.—DELITZSCH.

The meaning of the prophet is not exhausted by the national fulfilment of the promise he was inspired to deliver. As he draws the brilliant picture of deliverance and spiritual sovereignty he finds the figure of "the servant of the Lord" occupying mysteriously the central place. As he gazes upon the nation and the nation's work he is led to discern One in whom the blessing and the burden of Israel are to be concentrated, One despised and rejected, who shall display the majesty of dominion, One who shall show through vicarious suffering the power and the purpose of manhood, One who through death shall satisfy the travail of His soul. In this figure he is able to discover some light upon the contradictions of earth; a reconciliation of the inevitable sorrows by which he is encompassed and the joys which he confidently looks for.

BP. WESTCOTT.

There is no suffering in the world but ultimately comes to be endured by God.—A. F. QUILLER-COUCH.

It is our faith that God not only knows this sad life of ours, but that He has actually lived it and consecrated it, which has transformed the bitter water of our affliction into the wine of joy and gladness.—A. TYRRELL.

I was met, from the eyes and brow of Him who was indeed acquainted with grief, by a look of solemn recognition, such as passes between friends who have endured between them some strange and secret sorrow, and are through it united in a bond which cannot be broken.—DORA GREENWELL.

EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Isa. LV. 1.

COME and buy, i.e. make it your own, by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves. Come and eat ; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy. A strange way of buying, not only without ready money, that is common enough, but without any money, or the promise of any. Our buying without money intimates that the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon ; that He who offers them has no need of us or of any returns we can make Him : He makes us these proposals not because He has occasion to sell, but because He has a disposition to give.—M. HENRY.

There are thirsts which infallibly point to their true objects. If a man is hungry, he knows that it is food that he wants. We have social instincts ; we need love ; we need friendship ; we need somebody to lean upon ; we thirst for some heart to rest our heads upon, for hands to clasp ours ; and we know where the creatures and the objects are that will satisfy these desires. And there are the higher thirsts of the spirit ; the thirsts that some of us know not where to satisfy. But notice my text, “ Come ye to the waters ” . . . “ buy wine and milk.” The great fountain is set up, and every man may drink, be it “ water ” that refreshes, or “ wine ” that gladdens, or “ milk ” that nourishes. They are all contained in this one great gift that flows out from the deep heart of God to the thirsty lips of parched humanity.—A. MACLAREN.

GOD'S LESSER HEAVEN

*Thus saith the high and lofty
One that inhabiteth eternity,
whose name is Holy : I dwell
in the high and holy place,
with him also that is of a
contrite and humble spirit.*

Isa. LVII. 15.

HE hath a tender pity for the humble and contrite. He will not overlook them, though they are low and poor in the world. He will be always nigh to them, and present with them, as a father with those of his own family.

He that dwells in the highest heaven dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as He inhabits eternity.—M. HENRY.

The central truth for the comfort of God's people is that the infinitely Great One cares even for the infinitely little. The truth of the greatness of lowliness manifested in the life of Christ was but the reflection of the permanent law of the Divine government.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

In the lowest hearts He dwelleth, as well as in the highest heavens. A broken heart is God's lesser heaven ; here He dwelleth with delight.—J. TRAPP.

We have here three inhabitations that lie within and round about each other like concentric circles. I. God's inhabitation of infinite time is announced. "He inhabiteth eternity." That rests upon the essential properties of an unbegotten being. II. We are reminded of His inhabitation of selected space. "I dwell in the high and holy place." That rests upon His free elective affinities. III. We are assured of the mystery of His inhabitation of broken and lowly hearts. "With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." That rests upon His pure compassion.—T. G. SELBY.

Humble hearts are fruitful valleys.—J. NORRIS.

ARISE, SHINE

*Arise, shine ; for thy light is
come, and the glory of the
LORD is risen upon thee.*

Isa. LX. 1.

ROUSE thyself, for deliverance is at hand ; be filled with joy, for thou art about to change thy condition ; be cheerful in the light of that knowledge ; discover thyself, or come forth as one breaking forth from a dark night.—M. POOLE.

Observe the contrast between Zion and Babylon. To Babylon it is said, “ Come down, and sit in the dust ” (xlvii. 1) ; but to Zion, “ Arise, shine.”

BP. WORDSWORTH.

Christ was the Start—Jesus Christ, a single point of unsullied light inserted within the weight of darkness ; a single spot in all human nature seized, secured, held like a fortress, where the curative force of God could be lodged safe from all attack. The human body of Jesus Christ—that white point of light, that fortress spot held for God within the darkened mass—was a pledge and a security to God that the whole mass could yet be penetrated and redeemed, just because it now holds within itself the power to work out its own salvation. It was a pledge, a prophecy, a security ! Yes : but all the slow process of penetrating the mass of the darkness has yet to be accomplished ; and that process can only proceed by the gradual multiplication of these points of light.

SCOTT HOLLAND.

It is recorded that in Athens there was a law according to which any man who had a lighted candle and refused to allow another to light his by its means was to be punished by death.—HEGEL.

THE LORD'S ANOINTED

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.

Isa. LXI. 1.

THOUGH the prophet may speak this of himself, yet it is principally understood of Christ. "Hath anointed me," set me apart, i.e. both capacitating him with gifts, and commissioning him

with authority.—M. POOLE.

We have the best evidence that it is Christ of whom the prophet speaks, since the whole passage is endeared to us, and to a great extent identified, by the fact that our Lord Himself chose it for the text of His own first sermon, which He preached in the synagogue of Nazareth. I would ask you to note it is the only text of which we are sure Christ used there.—J. VAUGHAN.

The Spirit was given to Christ in this bounteous measure as the Head and Pattern of the new humanity. His fullness comprehended our need and the needs of all; and those who become true members of His Body may find the same Spirit, in His manifold influences, their daily and inalienable possession.—T. G. SELBY.

"To preach," referreth to Christ's prophetic office; as doth "binding up the broken-hearted" to His priestly, and "proclaiming liberty to the captives" to His kingly office. That which Christ came to preach was good tidings, goodspel or gospel, as we call it, the best news that ever came into the world. To this passage more than any other we may trace the use of the word "gospel" in our Lord's teaching and that of the Apostles. Claiming the promise as fulfilled in Himself, He became the great evangelist.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

JEREMIAH

THE PROPHET'S CALL

*Then said I, Ah ! Lord GOD !
behold, I cannot speak : for I
am a child.*

Jer. I. 6.

THE prophet's reply, "I am a child," may refer to his years or his experience. If his youth is meant, it means that he felt the great things he was called upon to declare were better suited to the lips of older men, especially if they had to be spoken to kings and princes. If the word refers to his lack of skill in such affairs, it implies a fear that his message would not be seriously regarded on this account.

M. POOLE.

The reluctance of Jeremiah toward his call is characteristic for his career. His was not the prompt and eager spirit of Isaiah crying out, "Here am I, send me," so soon as his lips felt God's fire and the summons reached his ear ; nor the unquestioning soul of Amos, to whom Jehovah's voice came with a note resounding and imperative as that of the lion roaring in the forest : he meets his commission with the reply, "Ah, Lord Jehovah, behold, I cannot speak : for I am but a boy." He feels no aptitude for public speech ; his youth, to begin with, is an insuperable bar. Jeremiah was sensible all along of the inadequacy of his powers and the bitterness of his task.—G. G. FINDLAY.

The boy would hear among the priests of his native town, not three miles distant from Jerusalem, of the idolatries and cruelties of Manasseh and his son Amon. He would be trained in the traditional precepts and ordinances of the Law. He would have become acquainted with the names and writings of older prophets, such as Micah and Isaiah.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

HIS COMMISSION

The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou?

Jer. I. 11.

THERE is a striking contrast between the method of Jeremiah's call and that of his predecessor Isaiah. Isaiah, the statesman, turned to the

temple, and there with eyes unsealed looked upon the majesty of the Lord of Hosts. Jeremiah, the countryman, "who looked on nature with the open eye of the poet, and to whom every passing event was a parable," met with God as he walked alone. It was a morning in mid-winter, when all seemed dead and bare, when nature seemed to confirm the dread that Jehovah had forgotten His rule and forsaken the world which He had made. Then suddenly, as he passed sadly on, he saw a tree without leaves laden with blossom. The Hebrew name for the almond means "the waker," as it is the first tree to wake to life again from the sleep of winter. As the prophet stood gazing, a message from above was flashed into his soul. The almond tree is the sign of the mighty irresistible forces of nature, which never sleep, but only watch for the time when the glories of a new spring shall be revealed. Even so it is with God. He is awake, watching over His mighty words of promise and of threatening spoken so long ago. His purposes can never fail. That hour made Jeremiah a prophet.

W. J. MOULTON.

A seething pot (ver. 13) doth fitly represent God's judgments, which are often compared to a fire. In this case the fire is raised or driven by a wind coming from the north, where lay the invaders.—BP. LOWTH.

We find from Ezek. xxiv. 3 that a boiling pot was an emblem of war.—A. CLARKE.

HIS CHARACTER

Behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls, against the whole land.

Jer. I. 18.

THIS young stripling of a prophet is made by the power of God as an impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars, and surrounded with walls of brass ; he sallies out upon them in reproofs and threatenings ; they set upon him on every side ; kings and princes batter him with their power ; priests thunder against him with their censures ; the people of the land shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words ; but he shall keep his ground and make his part good.—M. HENRY.

The first quality exhibited in Jeremiah's character and history is shrinking timidity. His first words are, "Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak : for I am a child." The storm of inspiration had seized on a sensitive plant or quivering aspen, instead of an oak or a pine. And yet this very weakness serves at length to attest the truth and power of the afflatus. Jeremiah, with a less pronounced personality than his brethren, supplies a better image of an instrument in God's hand, of one moved, tuned, taught, from behind and above. Strong in supernal strength, the child is made a "fenced city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall." Traces, indeed, of his original feebleness and reluctance to undertake stern duties are found scattered throughout his prophecy. But he is reassured, by remembering that the Lord is with him, as a "mighty terrible one." His chief power, besides pathos, is impassioned exhortation. His prophecy is one long application. He is distinguished by powerful and searching practicalness.

G. GILFILLAN.

THE PROPHET'S PREACHING

*Go, and cry in the ears of
Jerusalem.*

Jer. II. 2.

WITH the approaching
dissolution of the Jewish

State appeared the prophet
Jeremiah, a poet, from his

exquisitely pathetic powers, admirably calculated to perform the funeral obsequies over the last of her kings, over the captive people, the desolate city, the ruined Temple. The prophet himself, in the eventful course of his melancholy and persecuted life, learned that personal familiarity with affliction which added new energy to his lamentations over his country and his religion. The kings recede into obscurity; the central figure around which gathers all the interest of the falling State, the counsellor whose warning voice rises above the tumult, but which is seldom heard, is the Prophet Jeremiah. Throughout this long agony of the dying kingdom, he almost alone is endeavouring to avert, or delay, or mitigate the blow; he is afflicted in all the afflictions of the king and people: when he cannot give hope, or consolation, or peace, he gives his tender sympathy, is himself the sad example of exile, persecution, misery, death, and a living pattern of the Lord's suffering servant.—H. H. MILMAN.

Jeremiah was one of those rare instances in the Jewish history, in which Priest and Prophet were combined, and by a singularly tragic fate he lived precisely at that age in which both of these great institutions seemed to have reached the utmost point of degradation and corruption.—DEAN STANLEY.

It was the great unhappiness of this prophet to be a physician to the dying State, but the disease prevailed against the remedy.—M. POOLE.

A CALL TO REMEMBRANCE

I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.

Jer. II. 2.

I CALL to mind the kindness that was between us, the early affections of thine to me in thy youth, and the favour I showed thee in thy early history, when I entered into a covenant relation with thee at the giving of the Law.—M. POOLE.

God professes to retain the same kindness and favourable disposition towards Israel which He had manifested in their earlier days. He expostulateth with them on their ungrateful returns for His past goodness ; and showeth that it was not want of affection in Him, but their own extreme and unparalleled wickedness and disloyalty, which had already subjected and would still subject them to calamities and misery.—B. BLAYNEY.

Though in the words “remember for thee” it is implied that the kindness and love of the espousals are now only an object of remembrance, a lost joy, yet the third verse declares that a permanent relation was the result of that transient one, an indelible character having been impressed upon the people by that sometime connection with their Lord. They thus become a sanctuary of Jehovah, separate from the nations. This thought is further developed by a beautiful image : Israel is related to the Gentiles as the first-fruits sanctified unto the Lord are to the multitude of common wild fruits ; and as profane lips were forbidden to eat the former, so will guilt be upon those who touch the sacred first-fruits in the field of humanity.—NAEGELSBACH.

Israel was then consecrated to the Lord, and set apart for His service ; as the first-fruits are wont to be sequestered and devoted to God.—BP. HALL.

BROKEN CISTERNS

My people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Jer. II. 13.

THROUGHOUT all the hill country of Judah and Benjamin, fountains and streams are few as compared with Europe and America ; and the inhabitants collect water during the rainy season in tanks and cisterns placed in the fields and along the highroads. These, of course, when “ broken ” or dilapidated were useless.

W. M. THOMPSON.

They have turned their backs upon God and cheated themselves.—M. HENRY.

What we call here “ broken cisterns ” means more properly such vessels as were ill made, badly put together, so that the water leaked through.—A. CLARKE.

Cisterns hold but muddy water at best ; being “ broken cisterns,” riven vessels, what hold they else but mud and gravel ?—J. TRAPP.

God is the Author and Giver of all blessings, both spiritual and temporal ; and from Him all good gifts are derived, as from an inexhaustible spring or fountain (Ps. xxxvi. 9). And wherever else men place their happiness, whether in false religions or in the uncertain comforts of worldly blessings, they will find themselves disappointed, just as they that expect to find water at broken cisterns or conduits.—W. LOWTH.

Why is this world unsatisfying ? Brethren, it is the grandeur of the soul which God has given us, which makes it insatiable in its desires—with an infinite void which cannot be filled up. A soul which was made for God, how can the world fill it ?—F. W. ROBERTSON.

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FALLOW GROUND

*Break up your fallow ground,
and sow not among thorns.*

Jer. IV. 3.

HITHERTO, O my people, your hearts have been like a rough, thorny, uncultured ground ; but now break up this fallow ground of yours, by an unfeigned repentance, and root up these thorns of your corruptions.—BP. HALL.

Make a thorough reformation. Plough up, not a part only, but the whole of your civil and ecclesiastical estate, which is now lying barren and unfruitful ; and sow the good seed in the spiritual soil cleared of weeds and thorns. The Lord here repeats by Jeremiah the words which He had spoken to Israel by Hosea (x. 12) : “ Sow to yourselves in righteousness ; break up your fallow ground ” (cp. Matt. xiii. 7).—BP. WORDSWORTH.

He exhorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to repent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground, that they expect any good of ; they must plough it up. An unconvinced, unhumiliated heart is like fallow ground, ground untilled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement ; it is our ground, let out to us, and we are accountable for it ; but it is fallow, it is unfenced, and lies common, it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which is the natural product of the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace.—M. HENRY.

The phrase seems to intimate that the people were wont to mix the truths of God with their own superstitions, as seed among thorns.—M. POOLE.

A CITY OF SIN

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her.

Jer. V. 1.

LOOK in the streets where they made their appearance, and conversed together, and in the broad places where they kept their markets : see if you can find a man, i.e. a magistrate (so some) that executes judgment, and administers judgment impartially, that will put the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. Or if there be here and there a man that is truly conscientious, and doth at least seek the truth, yet you shall not find him in the streets and broad places, he dares not appear publicly, for he shall be abused and run down.

M. HENRY.

Diogenes is said to have sought for a good man in Athens with a lantern and a candle at noonday. And once, when he had made an " Oh yes " in the market-place, crying out, " Hear, O ye men," and thereupon company came about him to hear what the matter was, he rated them away again with this speech, " I called for men, and not for valets."—J. TRAPP.

It implies the great scarcity of good men in Jerusalem. " Broad places " means the market-places, and those centres of popular resort where most men were to be found.—M. POOLE.

The low state of public morals in Judah in Jeremiah's time, the corruption that had penetrated into the inmost core of Jewish society, is here strikingly evinced by the total perversion of truth and righteousness in all public functionaries.—E. H. BICKERSTETH.

DIVINE JUSTICE

Shall I not visit for these things ? saith the LORD.

Jer. V. 29.

IT is expressed as a thing taken for granted, He certainly will. Can I be God and wink at such things ? It

cannot be.—M. POOLE.

God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility, inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword : he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and the deadworthy from the true and lifeworthy ; making all human history, and the biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in place of a Devil's Chaos.—CARLYLE.

God (for the most part) doth neither punish, nor bless at once, but by degrees, and warnings. The world is so full of changings, that it is rare for one man to see the completed race of another. We live not long enough to observe how the Judgments of the justice God do walk their rounds in striking. Neither always are we able. Some of God's corrections are in the night, and closeted. Every offence meets not with a market lash. Private punishments sometimes gripe a man within, while men looking on the outer face of things, see not how they smart in secret.—O. FELTHAM.

Each one of us who sins, with his own free will chooses punishment, and the blame lies with him who chooses.—CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these.

Jer. VII. 4.

JEREMIAH assails the popular pride in the temple as a deadly superstition. He even writes as though the ceremonial system of worship formed no part of Israel's duty, and was never enjoined

by Jehovah, whose law was purely ethical. To take his expressions, and to argue that he condemned temple-sacrifice and priestly ministrations as intrinsically wrong and contrary to Jehovah's mind, is a pedantic interpretation. He is putting in an extreme and paradoxical way his sense of the hatefulness of mechanical forms without inward piety and the futility of attempting to atone for the absence of the latter by lavishness in the former.—G. G. FINDLAY.

Jeremiah was the first to set religion consciously free from all extraneous and material elements, and to establish it on a purely spiritual basis.—C. H. CORNHILL.

From the point of view of the Christian, Jeremiah's message comes ultimately to this—that the lowly and believing heart is God's favourite temple, and the only one which has permanence.—T. K. CHEYNE.

The form of godliness is common but the power of it is rare. The form of godliness is cheap, but the power of it costs much. The form of godliness is easy, but the power of it is difficult. The form of godliness is a credit, but the power of it is a reproach. The form of godliness is pleasing, but its power is displeasing to the ignoble part of a Christian. The form of godliness may exist with secret and with open wickedness, but the power of godliness cannot.—PHILIP BROOKS.

THE PROPHET'S REMEDY

Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth.

Jer. IX. 24.

THIS is the prophet's remedy for the healing of the nation. It is the true understanding and knowledge of God, of which the first means the spiritual enlightenment of the mind, the other the training of the heart unto obedience. This knowledge of God is further said to find in Him three chief attributes : lovingkindness, a readiness to show grace and mercy ; judgment, a belief in which is declared by the writer to the Hebrews to be essential to faith ; and righteousness, without which religion would be vanity.—R. P. SMITH.

Let not men value themselves for their wisdom, strength, or riches, which are things of themselves of a very uncertain continuance, and such calamities are coming, in which they will stand the owners of them in very little stead. The only true valuable endowment is the knowledge of God, not as He is in Himself, which is too high an attainment for poor mortals to pretend to, but with respect to His dealings with man ; to have a serious sense of His mercies to the penitent, of His judgments to the obstinate, and of His truth and integrity in making good His promises and threatenings to both. 'Tis in the exercise of these attributes God chiefly delights ; and 'tis by these He desires to make Himself known to the world.—W. LOWTH.

The passage is interesting as having clearly been present to the mind of St. Paul in writing 1 Cor. i. 31, 2 Cor. x. 17. He had learnt from it to estimate the wisdom and the greatness on which the Corinthians

prided themselves at their true value. We may find a parallel even in the higher words which teach us that " eternal life is to know God " (John xvii. 3), to understand those attributes, love, judgment, righteousness, which we associate with our thoughts of Him, as indeed they are in their infinite perfection, and which when we know them as we ought to know, we must needs strive to reproduce.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Let none plume themselves on the possession of wisdom, strength, or riches, for these are things of uncertain duration at all times. The only truly valuable endowment is the knowledge of God as He is revealed in His word—such as gives a lively perception of His mercies to the penitent, of His judgments on the obdurate and wicked, and of His truth and faithfulness in accomplishing both His promises and threatenings. It is in the exercise of these attributes God principally delights ; it is by these He desires to make Himself known to the world ; and whoever forms an apprehension of God chiefly with regard to these, His perfections, will always dispose himself suitably toward Him.

E. H. BICKERSTETH.

This is the moral of the history of Jerusalem. She trusted in herself. She relied on her own wisdom, riches, and might, and would not know the Lord ; and therefore she was destroyed. Thus she is a warning to every nation, and to every individual in every age.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and His judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath, but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction, and with which to excuse themselves in their obstinacy and care-

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lessness ; he therefore sets himself here to drive them from these refuges of lies, and to show them the insufficiency of them. When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be, they pleaded the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this, he shows them the folly of trusting to, and boasting of all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon (vers. 23, 24).

Here he shows what we may not depend upon in a day of distress : “ Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,” as if with the help of that he could outwit or countermines the enemy ; or in the greatest extremity find out some evasion or other, for a man’s wisdom may fail him then when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. All human force is nothing without God, worse than nothing against Him. But may not the rich man’s wealth be his strong city, and money his refuge ? no, “ Let not the rich man glory in his riches,” for they may prove so far from sheltering him, that they may expose him, and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men, and mighty men, and rich men, that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans, because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money, for all these will prove but vain things for safety. We may glory in this, that wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that “ exerciseth lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth.”—M. HENRY.

THE REJECTED PROPHET

I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter ; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me.

Jer. XI. 19.

IN this history we have a foreshadowing of the gospel.—SIR E. BAYLEY.

A new section opens abruptly, and the prophet speaks no longer of the sins of Israel and Judah at large, but of the “doings” of his own townsmen, of their plots against his life. Unless this is altogether a distinct fragment, the abruptness suggests the inference that the plots of the men of Anathoth against him had suddenly been brought under his notice.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Where shall a man find worse friends than at home ? A prophet is nowhere so little set by as in his own country.—J. TRAPP.

Observe the progress of the prophecy. God reveals by Jeremiah that the punishment of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldæans is due to their breach of the covenant with Him ; and the prophecy reaches onward to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans for the rejection of Christ. All that happened to the Prophet Jeremiah, who was specially the suffering Prophet, was a foreshadowing of what would happen to the Great Prophet of whom Moses spake, “the Man of sorrows” ; and we should read these narratives concerning Jeremiah with comparatively little profit, unless we saw here a prophetic adumbration of Christ the spotless Lamb of God.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

Almost all things that the prophets did and suffered were figurative of Christ ; and whatever was fulfilled in Jeremiah was a prophecy concerning the Lord Himself.

JEROME.

THE PROPHET'S DISCIPLINE

Woe is me.

Jer. XV. 10.

IN the character of Jeremiah, as represented by himself (candidly and ingenuously displaying his own infirmities, and gaining credence thereby), there is a struggle of conflicting passions ; of tender love for his country, mingled with indignant zeal for God, and for His offended Majesty, and also with personal consciousness of the wrong suffered by himself at the hands of his countrymen, for the faithful and courageous discharge of his prophetic functions ; and with apprehension of the bitter sarcasms to which he will be exposed, if the prophecies which he has uttered in the Lord's Name, of impending ruin to Jerusalem, should not be fulfilled.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

A singular fact is it, that this solitary preacher, the butt of a nation's ridicule, does not seem to have been made for such work. Usually God fits the man to his life's work. If he is to have stern work to do, he is made of stern stuff. Luther, with much that was lovable in his nature, was, on the whole, a rough, stout man. That square face and thick neck and those compact lips of his, indicate a man of will, who could bear rougher handling than other men. He was to contend with devils ; and God gave him a nature which devils feared. Nobody ever called Luther the "weeping prophet." If he shed tears, it was on his knees before God only. He shed no tears before the Diet of Worms. He was in no lachrymose mood when he had the Pope's bull to deal with, outside the Elster Gate of Wittenberg. The mourning prophet of Judæa does not seem to have been of stern make. He had a delicate and retiring nature.

Gentle and unselfish was he, like a loving woman. When the sombre truth first dawns upon his early manhood, and he sees the work he has to do, he breaks out with the despairing cry, "Ah, Lord! I cannot speak: I am but a child!" So overwhelmed is he by the sight of his country's shame, and the foresight of her doom, that he exclaims, "Oh that my head were waters, that I might weep day and night for the daughter of my people!" His writings show, by their chosen imagery, that he longs for solitude. He hungers to get away from the sins and sorrows of his time. Cowper's refrain, "Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness!" would have expressed the habit of his mind. He "sits alone, and keeps silence, crouching under his burden."

A. PHELPS.

Jeremiah has now touched bottom, as one may say; he has reached the nadir of his despair. With the consciousness he had of his supernatural call, of the fact that he was "consecrated before he came forth out of the womb" and "appointed a prophet unto the nations," the imprecation of xx. 14-18 was nothing short of a repudiation of his mission and the teaching of his life. *God has played with him and made a fool of him*: so Jeremiah, for the moment, believed and said; and so it is set down "for our admonition." We detected at the beginning the root of Jeremiah's discontent, the cause of his wild anger against his persecutors and his reproachings of God, in the man's self-love; he was touched with the spirit that made Jonah sulk beneath his gourd and clamour for death on its perishing, because Nineveh still stood after he had proclaimed its ruin. But who are we to condemn the prophet for his whirling speech? It was a veritable Calvary to which he was brought; all we can say is,

that when "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (see xi. 19), Jeremiah proved himself unequal to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." The forerunner fell short of the perfect example—"who did no sin; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not." The Lord, who "knoweth our frame," would not take His overwrought servant at his word; Jeremiah was spared to "endure to the end," that he might "be saved." His recording of the train of inward revolts and fightings against God that marked his course is evidence that he had risen above them and that the bitterness passed from his soul; he became a wholly chastened man, purged of the old leaven and with the law written deep in his heart, ready without a murmur to do Jehovah's will.

G. G. FINDLAY.

He cried out in bitter agony that God had deceived him; had induced him to become a prophet, and then repaid him for speaking God's message with nothing but disappointment and misery. And yet he felt he must speak; God, he said, was stronger than he was, and forced him to it. He said, "I will speak no more words in His name; but the Word of the Lord was as fire within his bones, and would not let him rest"; and so, in spite of himself, he told the truth, and suffered for it; and hated to have to tell it, and pitied and loved the very country which he rebuked, till he cursed "the day in which he saw the light, and the hour in which it was said to his father, 'There is a man-child born.'" You who fancy that it is a fine thing, and a paying profession, to be a preacher of righteousness, and a rebuker of sin, look at Jeremiah, and judge! For as surely as you or any other man is sent by God to do Jeremiah's work, so surely he must expect Jeremiah's wages. A

sad calling, truly, and all the more sad because Jeremiah had no pride, no steadfast opinion of his own excellence to keep him up. He hates his calling of prophet. At the very moment he is foretelling woe, he prays God that his prophecy may not come true ; he tries every method to prevent its coming true, by entreating his countrymen to repent. There runs through all his awful words a vein of tenderness and pity and love unspeakable, which to me is the one great mark of a true prophet ; a sign that Jeremiah spoke by the Spirit of God ; a sign that too many writers nowadays do not speak by the Spirit of God.—C. KINGSLEY.

Great were the outward sufferings of Jeremiah's life. To a man of his sensitive and refined nature, the indignities to which he was exposed must have been peculiarly painful : but his chief trial evidently lay within. The failure which attended his labours, the hostility shown by his nearest relatives, his seeming desertion by God, perplexed and afflicted him. Why was he given so weighty a charge, and then left to fight the battle alone ? Why did evil prevail unchecked in the land, and God's truth fail in its effect ? Spiritual depression therefore is quite consistent with the existence of a true faith and of a fixed purpose of living to God : but if with advancing knowledge, and with a growing spirit of inquiry, the Christian's mental difficulties increase rather than diminish, it will always be of use to remember that the foremost of God's servants have suffered in like manner before us, and that the most exalted saintship can claim no exemption from the painful discipline of mental conflict.—SIR E. BAYLEY.

Both God and men seemed to reject him. But his repulse by men drove him to God, and his repulse by God made him press closer to Him.—A. B. DAVIDSON.

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SEARCHING THE HEART

*I the LORD search the heart,
I try the reins.*

Jer. XVII. 10.

THE prophets before Jeremiah dealt largely with "sins," single acts of transgression against God's will.

Jeremiah deals with sin in the heart as the root and ground of individual sins. He is the first to lay stress on the fact of sinful habit or disposition. To Jeremiah the heart is the man ; sin is the stubbornness of an evil heart. This sinful disposition characterises human nature as a whole (xvii. 9), Israel as a nation (vii. 24), and the individual Israelite (v. 1) ; and the prophet calls not only the nation, but individuals to repentance (xviii. 11).—W. J. FARLEY.

Signifying the most secret thoughts and motions of the soul : these God is said to "search" and "try," not as if it were a work of labour and difficulty to the Divine knowledge to penetrate the hearts of men, and to dive into their thoughts, but to signify to us the perfection and exactness of the Divine knowledge : as, when men would know a thing exactly, they search into every part of it, and examine everything narrowly. On the same account He is elsewhere said "to weigh the spirits" of men (Prov. xvi. 2), intimating that He has that perfect knowledge of the secrets of men's hearts which men have of those things that they weigh in a balance with the greatest exactness.—ABP. TILLOTSON.

It is the property of God alone perfectly to discover the whole bent and frame of men's dispositions.

W. LOWTH.

God sees hearts as we see faces.—G. HERBERT.

Our corrupt hearts are the factories of the devil, and may be at work without his presence.—T. BROWNE.

AT THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

*Cannot I do with you as this
potter ? saith the LORD.*

Jer. XVIII. 6.

THE clay can resist the potter, or can yield itself willingly to his hands to be shaped as he wills. Its being " marred " is through no fault of the potter, but—in the framework of the parable—through the defect of the material, and, in its application, through the resistance of the human agents whom God is fashioning. And when it is so marred one of two courses is open to the potter. He can again remould and fashion it to his purpose, to a new work which may be less honourable than that for which it was originally designed ; or, if it be hopelessly marred, can break it and cast it away, and with fresh clay mould a fresh vessel. The history of nations and churches and individual men offers many examples of both processes. They frustrate God's gracious purpose by their self-will, but He gives them another chance.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

But I need Thee, as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men ;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life,
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst,

So take and use Thy work !
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand ;
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same.

BROWNING.

THE LORD IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

This is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD is our righteousness.

Jer. XXIII. 6.

THIS Name is compounded of three words : 1, *Jehova* ; 2, *justitia* ; 3, *nostra*—all of them necessary, all of them essential.

Jehova. Touching which word, and the ground why it must be a part of this name, the Prophet David resolveth us : “ I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of thine only,” saith he (Ps. lxxi. 16).

Justitia, “righteousness.” Why that ? If we ask, in regard of the other benefits which are before remembered, salvation and peace, why “righteousness” and not salvation nor peace ? it is evident. Because—as, in the verse next before, the prophet termeth it—“righteousness” is the branch ; and these two, salvation and peace, are the fruits growing on it.

Nostra. And neither may this be left out, for without this *Jehova* alone doth not concern us ; and the righteousness of God is altogether against us. But if He be righteousness, and not only righteousness, but *ours* too, we have our desires : verily, this possessive word of application is all in all. He hath not given us the operation or effect of His righteousness, but His very righteousness, yea, His very self unto us. To the end “that we might be made” (not righteous persons ; that was not full enough, but) “*righteousness*” itself ; and there he stays not yet, and not every righteousness, but the very “righteousness of God” Himself. What can be further said, what can be conceived more comfortable ? To have Him ours, not to make us righteous, but to make us “righteousness,” and that not any other, but “the righteousness of God.”—BP. ANDREWES.

A NEW COVENANT

I will make a new covenant.

Jer. XXXI. 31.

HERE is the culminating point, not only of the prophecy of Jeremiah, but of that of the whole Old Testament ; the marvellous prediction of the abolition of that very covenant to which the prophecy itself belongs, and of the coming in of a totally different order of things, resting upon a new basis.

F. GODET.

Both in itself, and as the germ of the future of the spiritual history of mankind, the words are of immense significance. It was to this that the Lord Jesus directed the thoughts of His disciples, as the prophecy which, above all other prophecies, He had come to fulfil by the sacrifice of Himself. In that "New Covenant" in His blood, which He solemnly proclaimed at the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 28), and which was commemorated whenever men met to partake of the Supper of the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 25), there was latent the whole argument of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chs. viii.—x.), the whole Gospel of justification by faith as proclaimed by St. Paul (Gal. iii. 15–17). From it the Church took the title of the New Covenant, the New Testament, which it gave to the collected writings of the Apostolic age. This title in its turn gave the name of the Old Testament to the collected writings which recorded how "in sundry times and divers manners" God had spoken in time past to Israel.

The promise is too commonly dealt with as standing by itself, without reference to the sequence of thought in which we find it placed. That sequence, however, is not hard to trace. The common proverb about the sour grapes had set the prophet thinking

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on the laws of God's dealings with men. He felt that something more was needed to restrain men from evil than the thought that they might be transmitting evil to their children's children—something more even than the thought of direct personal responsibility, and of a perfectly righteous retribution. And that something was to be found in the idea of a law—not written on tablets of stone, not threatening and condemning from without, and denouncing punishment on the transgressors and their descendants, but written on heart and spirit (2 Cor. iii. 3-6). It is noticeable, as showing how like thoughts were working in the minds of the two prophets, that in Ezekiel also the promise of a "new heart and new spirit" comes in close sequence upon the protest against the adage about the "children's teeth being set on edge" (Ezek. xviii. 31).—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The old law could be broken ; to remedy this, God gives, not a new law, but a new power to the old law. It used to be a mere code of morals, external to the man, and obeyed as a duty ; in Christianity it becomes an inner force, shaping the man's character from within. In obeying it, therefore, a man is acting in accordance with his own renewed nature. Thus the Sermon on the Mount is the old Mosaic law, but changed into principles of conduct, which reach down to a man's heart and conscience ; and similarly, instead of gross material sacrifices of oxen and sheep, "we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God."—R. P. SMITH.

There are two main parts in this covenant : the first regards the gratuitous remission of sins ; and the other, the inward renovation of the heart. There is a third which depends on the second, and that is the illumina-

tion of the mind as to the knowledge of God. It is the work of the Spirit of God to illuminate our minds, so that we may know what the will of God is, and also to bend our hearts to obedience.—CALVIN.

Jeremiah dares to proclaim that the old covenant is superseded by a new one which more completely meets the wants of poor human nature. All that he affirms is that there shall be direct relations between Jehovah and each member of His people (individuality shall come to its rights).—T. K. CHEYNE.

Jehovah makes the New Covenant a religious relationship. He gives personality its rights, and places it beyond the consequences of family connection, in which the personality, according to the dominant doctrine of retribution, had disappeared. Hence the new covenant is not only a relation of God to His people, but also to each individual as a person. From the time of the New Covenant, the law of God becomes a living spirit, and is no longer a dead letter ; it is henceforth an inward possession and inclination, and the recognition of God and His salvation is not confined to a body of teachers, but becomes the possession of all.

F. DELITZSCH.

The ideality and universality of religion—these are the two grand apprehensions which Jeremiah has given to the world. Every man as such is born a child of God. He does not become such through the forms of any definite religion, or outward organisation, but he becomes such in his heart. A pure heart and a pure mind are all that God requires of man, let his piety choose what form it will, so long as it is genuine. Thus we have in Jeremiah the purest and highest consummation of the prophecy of Israel and of the religion of the Old Testament.—C. H. CORNHILL.

THE PROPHET'S FAITH

I bought the field that was in Anathoth.

Jer. XXXII. 9.

AT Anathoth, Jeremiah was born. Tradition

places it about three miles from Jerusalem. It must at the time have been occupied by the camp of the invading army, for Anathoth was in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and, consequently, the faith of Jeremiah in the Divine promise was the more strikingly displayed by his purchase of it.—E. H. BICKERSTETH.

This was bravely done, to make a purchase at such a time, when the enemy was seizing upon all. That Roman is famous in history who adventured to purchase that field near Rome wherein Hannibal had pitched his camp ; but the Romans were nothing near so low at that time as the Jews were at this.—J. TRAPP.

The purchase of the hereditary field by the prophet who foretold the future restoration would show that he believed his own prophecy, and that his acts accorded with his words.—A. R. FAUSSET.

When we are outwardly prosperous, we think no one can take our prosperity from us ; and when trouble comes upon us, we again think that no one can help us. Both courses are, however, equally ungodly. Therefore God's servants must contradict both those who are at ease and those who are in despair. The reverse is always right. In good days humble thyself, and in bad days let thyself be exalted, for then it is a great thing to do.—DIEDRICH.

The open or unsealed writing was probably either a copy of the sealed deed, or else a certificate of the witnesses in whose presence the deed of purchase was signed and sealed.—W. LOWTH.

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WORD

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee.

Jer. XXXVI. 2.

JEWISH rolls were made of vellum or dressed sheepskins, cut into lengths, stitched together and rolled upon a roller. The matter was written on these skins in columns.—A. CLARKE.

Jeremiah dictated to his friend and pupil Baruch, the sermons he had preached during the preceding twenty years or more, and sent him to read the roll aloud in the temple. The narrative in this chapter is of peculiar interest, because it is the only account in the Old Testament of the origin of a prophetic book. When Jehoiakim the king heard of it, he ordered the book to be read to him, cut the pages into pieces, and burnt them on the fire in his chamber. He ordered the arrest of the prophet and his secretary, but being warned by friendly nobles, they kept out of harm's way.

W. J. FARLEY.

The narrative shows how absolutely ignorant those in high authority had been of the prophetic teaching. The spoken word had never reached them; it is only the written word which gains entrance at last. And the burning of the roll was not its disappearance.—H. B. ALFORD.

Jehoiakim's reason for his treatment of Jeremiah's prophecy was that there was in the message so much which to him, a fast young man, bent on luxury and display, and endeavouring to combine wickedness with an easy and popular form of religion, was not pleasant. The true reason for the most of scepticism is not found in inability of the understanding of the intellect. It is found in the heart—in the will.—S. H. KELLOGG.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

All the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem.

Jer. LII. 14.

THE capture of Jerusalem took place on the ninth day of the fourth month : on the seventh day of the fifth month (two days on which Hebrew devotion still commemorates the desolation of the city by solemn fast and humiliation) the relentless Nabuzaradan executed the orders of his master by levelling the city, the palaces, and the Temple, in one common ruin. The few remaining treasures, particularly the two brazen pillars which stood before the Temple, were sent to Babylon ; the chief priests were put to death, the rest carried into captivity.

Jeremiah survived to behold the sad accomplishment of all his darkest predictions. He witnessed all the horrors of the famine, and, when that had done its work, the triumph of the enemy. He saw the strongholds of the city cast down ; the palace of Solomon, the Temple of God, with all its courts, its roofs of cedar and of gold, levelled to the earth, or committed to the flames ; the sacred vessels, the ark of the covenant itself, with the cherubim, pillaged by profane hands. What were the feelings of a patriotic and religious Jew at this tremendous crisis, he has left on record in his unrivalled elegies. Never did city suffer a more miserable fate, never was ruined city lamented in language so exquisitely pathetic. Jerusalem is, as it were, personified, and bewailed with the passionate sorrow of private and domestic attachment ; while the more general pictures are drawn with all the life and reality of an eye-witness.

H. H. MILMAN.

THE LAMENTATIONS

JERUSALEM'S DESOLATION

*How doth the city sit solitary,
that was full of people !*

Lam. I. 1.

THERE is here no "word
of Jehovah," no direct
message to a sinful people.

The man speaks out of the fullness of his heart, and though a higher Spirit than his own helps him to give utterance to his sorrows, it is yet the language of a sufferer rather than of a teacher.

The power of entering into the spirit and meaning of poems such as these depends on two distinct conditions. We must seek to see, as with our own eyes, the desolation, misery, confusion, which came before those of the prophet. We must endeavour also to feel as he felt when he looked on them. And the last is the more difficult of the two. Jeremiah was not merely a patriot-poet, weeping over the ruin of his country. He was a prophet who had seen all this coming, and had foretold it as inevitable. He had urged submission to the Chaldæans as the only mode of diminishing the terrors of that "day of the Lord." And now the Chaldæans were come, irritated by the perfidy and rebellion of the king and princes of Judah ; and the actual horrors that he saw, surpassed, though he had predicted them, all that he had been able to imagine. All feeling of exultation in which, as mere prophet of evil, he might have indulged at the fulfilment of his forebodings, was swallowed up in deep overwhelming sorrow. Yet sorrow, not less than other emotions, works on men according to their characters, and a man with Jeremiah's gifts of utterance could not sit down in the mere silence and stupor of a hopeless grief. He was compelled to

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give expression to that which was devouring his heart and the heart of his people. The act itself was a relief to him. It led him on to a calmer and serener state. It revived the faith and hope which had been nearly crushed out.

There are perhaps few portions of the Old Testament which appear to have done the work they were meant to do more effectually than this. It has presented but scanty materials for the systems and controversies of theology. It has supplied thousands with the fullest utterance for their sorrows in the critical periods of national or individual suffering.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

A portion of chapter three is used by the Western Church on Good Friday. If this chapter is read with constant reference to the three great Passion Psalms (xxii., lxix., lxxxviii.), it will acquire new beauty and interest for the Christian, especially for the Christian penitent. And there are few portions of Holy Scripture which can more fitly exercise his devotional affections at the season of the Lord's Passion than this divine elegy, in which we may hear the voice of the Lord Himself, speaking by the Prophet, sometimes bewailing the sins of His fallen creatures, sometimes lamenting the injuries He Himself received at their hands ; and then proceeding to magnify God's justice and mercy, and to pray for His servants, and to represent His own Death, Burial, and Resurrection ; and to declare the judicial retribution with which all His enemies will be visited at the Day of Doom, when He, who died on the Cross for the sins of the world, will appear on the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory, and will sit on His throne as King and Judge of all.

The teaching of the ancient Church connecting this dirge with the Passion of Christ has been imbibed by one

THE LAMENTATIONS

of our most spiritual and holiest English poets, George Herbert, in his lines entitled "The Sacrifice."

BP. WORDSWORTH.

"Oh, all ye that pass by, whose eyes and mind
To worldly things are sharp, but to Me blind ;
To Me, who took eyes that I might you find,
Was ever grief like Mine ?

* * * * *

But, O My God, My God, why leav'st Thou Me,
The Son in whom Thou dost delight to be ?
My God, My God !—
Was ever grief like Mine ? "

G. HERBERT.

Never was there a more rich and elegant variety of beautiful images and adjuncts arranged together within so small a compass, nor more happily chosen and applied, than we find in these Lamentations over the fall of the Holy City.—BP. LOWTH.

One would think that every letter was written with a tear ; every word, the sound of a breaking heart.

DR. SOUTH.

Patriots who burn for your country's welfare, look at the prophecies and history of this extraordinary man ; look at his *Lamentations* ; take him through his life to his death, and learn from him what true patriotism means ! The man who watched, prayed, and lived for the welfare of his country ; who chose to share her adversities, her sorrows, her wants, her afflictions, and disgrace, where he might have been a companion of princes, and have sat at the table of kings ; who only ceased to live for his country when he ceased to breathe—that was a patriot, in comparison with whom almost all others are obscured.

A. CLARKE.

EZEKIEL

THE CAPTIVE PROPHET

*I was among the captives by
the river Chebar.*

Ezek. I. 1.

IN the year 597 B.C., eleven years before its final destruction, King Jehoiachin, after an ignoble reign of three months, surrendered Jerusalem to the Chaldæans, whose king, Nebuchadnezzar, carried away to Babylon Jehoiachin and his court, the princes and mighty men, and thousands of the more skilled and educated Jews. Among the band of exiles which began its weary march of five hundred miles across the burning sands of the Syrian desert to Babylon was a young priest, Ezekiel, who was destined to be the preserver of the faith and hope of his fellow-exiles, until his death twenty-seven years later.—W. J. FARLEY.

Josephus says that this removal happened when he was a boy, yet the statement is questionable, because it is improbable that Ezekiel long survived the twenty-seventh year of his exile (xxix. 17), so that if Josephus be correct he must have died very young. He was a member of a community of Jewish exiles who settled on the banks of the Chebar, a "river" or stream of Babylonia, which is sometimes taken to be the Khabour, but which the latest investigators suppose to be the Nahr Malcha or royal canal of Nebuchadnezzar.

F. W. FARRAR.

In this case we may suppose the Jewish captives to have been employed in the excavation of the canal.

G. RAWLINSON.

Ezekiel, whose prophetic designation is "son of man," is the priest and prophet, not of the Temple and City of Jerusalem, but of the spiritual Temple of Universal Humanity.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

VISIONS OF GOD

*The heavens were opened, and
I saw visions of God.*

Ezek. I. 1.

NOT by a division in the sky, but by the faith of the believer, were the heavens opened.—JEROME.

The great vision is the vision of God ; from it spring, not by mere methodical reasoning, but as a living growth, all the important movements in the realm of religious thought. When the young man Isaiah saw a vision of which he could say, " Mine eyes have seen the King," there came to him a power which settled the course of his future career, that gave a centre to what, for want of a better term, we may call his theology. Before him there had been many enthusiastic, intelligent worshippers of Israel's God who had seen visions and dreamed dreams. The ecstatic condition was not uncommon in the case of men who felt the Spirit of God rushing upon them, quickening them to bold speech, or stirring them to heroic action. Amos, the first of the great prophets who have had such a long and living influence, saw visions, thinly veiled symbols of the condemnation that was coming upon the sinful nation. But with these men we note the sparing use of visions ; except in the case of Ezekiel they are not made prominent. In later times the vision became a literary work more than a direct spiritual experience, a parable setting forth an important truth, or a needed lesson.

W. G. JORDAN.

The property of a false prophet is to be tossed and hurried about like a madman, but it is otherwise with a true prophet. His understanding is awake, his mind is in a sober and orderly state, and he knows everything he saith.—CHRYSOSTOM.

INTERPRETING THE VISIONS

The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel.

Ezek. I. 3.

THERE are many times in the midst of prophetical narrations some things related to be done by the prophets themselves upon the command of the prophetic voice, which have been generally conceived to have been acted really. But we shall not doubt to conclude that they were only scenical and imaginary ; except indeed they were such as of their own nature must have an historical meaning, in which an imaginary performance would not serve the turn.

For this purpose it may be worth our while to take notice of what Maimonides hath well determined. " Know therefore, that as it is in a dream, a man thinks that he hath been in this country or that, even so it is with the prophetical parables, as to what the prophets see or do in a prophetical vision. For whatsoever these parables inform us concerning any action the prophet doth, or concerning the space of time between one and another, or going from one place to another ; all this is in a prophetical vision ; neither are these actions real to sense, although some particulars may be precisely reckoned up in the writings of the prophets. For because it was well known that it was all done in a prophetical vision, it was not necessary in the rehearsing of every particularity to reiterate that it was in a prophetical vision ; as it was also needless to inculcate that it was in a dream. But now the vulgar sort of men think that all such actions, journeys, questions, and answers were really and sensibly performed, and not in a prophetical vision."

Thus we see how Maimonides rejects it as a vulgar

error to conceive that these actions which are commonly attributed to the prophets in the current of their prophecy, their travelling from place to place, their propounding questions and receiving answers, etc., were real things to sense ; whereas they were only imaginary, represented merely to the fancy.

For a more distinct understanding of this business, we must remember what hath been often suggested, that the prophetic scene or stage upon which all apparitions were made to the prophet was his imagination ; and that there all those things which God would have revealed to him were acted over symbolically, as in a masque, in which divers persons are brought in, amongst which the prophet himself bears a part : and therefore he, according to the exigency of this dramatical apparatus, must, as the other actors, perform his part, sometimes by speaking and reciting things done, propounding questions, sometimes by acting that part which in the drama he was appointed to act ; and so, not only by speaking, but by gestures and actions, come in, in his due place, among the rest ; as it is in our ordinary dreams. And therefore it is no wonder to hear of those things done which indeed have no historical or real verity ; the scope of all being to represent something strongly to the prophet's understanding, and sufficiently to inform it in the substance of those things in which he was to instruct those people to whom he was sent.

Though it be not always positively laid down in these narrations that the matter was in a vision ; yet the nature and scope of prophecy so requiring that things should thus be acted in imagination, we should rather expect some positive declaration to assure us that they were performed in history, if indeed it were so.

J. SMITH.

FOUR LIVING CREATURES

The likeness of four living creatures.

Ezek. I. 5.

THE living creatures are four; four is a number symbolical of universality. They are called "Cherubim."

In the Apocalypse of St. John they are called "living creatures." There they are about the throne of God. In Ezekiel they form the throne or chariot, on which He sits and rides. They lift up their wings and mount up from the earth, and the glory of the Lord is upon them. Their feet are straight, vigorously extended—a symbol of strength and of rectitude; and their soles sparkle like the splendour of polished brass. The hand of each is that of a man under their wings. Their wings are joined together; and they turn not when they go, but go straight forward. Each of the four living creatures has a fourfold aspect; the likeness of a "man" and of a "lion" on the right side, and the likeness of an "ox" and of an "eagle" on the left. Each has a distinct face and wings; but one pair of the wings of each is joined to the wings of another, to denote unity in flying, and with another pair they cover their bodies in reverence. Whither the Spirit willed to go, they go; they are like burning coals of fire, and lamps or torches, the same word as is used to describe Gideon's lamps or torches (Judg. vii. 16, 20), and therefore very suggestive as describing the flashing forth of Divine Truth. The fire goes up and down among them, like the fire at Pentecost (Acts ii. 3), and there is splendour in the fire; and from the fire goes forth lightning; and the living creatures run to and fro like a lightning flash. Each of the living creatures has a wheel for each of its four faces. The wheels are like beryl. Each of the four living

creatures, or cherubim, has one likeness ; and their wheels are like a wheel within a wheel, set transversely, so as to move in any direction without turning. And the rings of the wheels are full of eyes ; when the living creatures go, the wheels go with them ; and when the living creatures are lifted up, the wheels are lifted up. Whither the Spirit wills to go, they go, and the wheels go with them ; for the Spirit is in the wheels.

This Vision was designed to comfort Ezekiel in his captivity, and to encourage him to do his work as a prophet to Israel and the world. Whatever might happen to the walls of Sion and to its Temple, yet the Lord of Hosts, who sat there between the cherubim, and was there worshipped, was the Almighty God (ver. 24) ; the cherubim would become to Him a heavenly chariot, and He would ride upon it as a Mighty Conqueror and King into all lands.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

The images form a composite whole, unique in its kind, but grand and majestic in character ; and yet, however sublime and poetical the description is universally felt to be, there hung over it an obscurity, which long perplexed European commentators, almost beyond hope of removing it, till light was unexpectedly reflected on it by the exhumation of the Ninevite relics. In the pictorial representations of the king, a conspicuous place is occupied by a winged figure in a circle, which is commonly painted as hovering over the royal person. “ The king,” says Layard, “ is generally standing or kneeling beneath this figure in the circle, his hand raised in sign of prayer or adoration. The same symbol is also seen above him when in battle, and during his triumphal return. It is never represented above any person of inferior rank, but appears to watch especially over the monarch, who was, probably, typical of the nation.

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When over the king in battle, it shoots an arrow against the enemy. If he presides over a triumph, its action resembles that of the king, the right hand being elevated and the left holding the unbent bow ; if over a religious ceremony, it carries or raises the extended right hand. It sympathises with his every action, quiescent when he rests, and moving with him wherever he goes, the symbol of the unseen divinity. Sometimes the human bust is seen, sometimes it is wanting, and the circle, or wheel furnished with wings, is substituted for the complete form." This symbol was seen on the walls of the Ninevite palaces, along with the compound animals, which exhibited the figures of eagle-headed human beings, oxen and lions with the faces of men, and various figures with two or four wings, and they were painted in vermilion, a beautiful red colour ; and probably the sculptures, as has been conjectured, were originally gilded. Let the reader carry these circumstances in his mind, and then turn to the vision of Ezekiel, who describes " the likeness of four living creatures," which sparkled " like the colour of burnished brass " ; which had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides ; had also their wings and their faces, those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.

But the idea of these compound figures had a higher than Assyrian origin ; for the cherubim were early introduced into the Church (Gen. iii. 24), and their figures were so well known that no description of them was deemed necessary to the artisans who constructed the tabernacle. In the temple, also, they had a place ; so that, as a priest, who must have been familiar with the appearance of those mystic symbols, Ezekiel assuredly derived the conceptions he has here embodied from

that appropriate quarter, rather than from the traditional forms of those antediluvian symbols which pagan idolatry had preserved, but corrupted ; and as it was his special design to persuade his captive countrymen that the worship of God could be celebrated, and His presence enjoyed, by them in the land of their exile, so in this opening vision his rapt spirit transported him to the temple at Jerusalem, and he spoke to them as the Lord's servant, who, even in Chaldæa, had seen Him who " dwelt between the cherubim."

Moreover, this vision of Ezekiel does not contain merely an ideal reproduction of the cherubic forms in the sanctuary. There are several striking differences which are worthy of notice. In the tabernacle and temple there were only two of these symbolic figures. Here two additional ones appear, indicating that although the Mosaic dispensation was still to continue the basis of covenant obligation to the Jewish people, new life was to be imparted to it. In the cherubim of Moses, the " creatures " were similar, and their human faces were represented looking towards each other and the mercy-seat (Exod. xxv. 19, 20), but in those of Ezekiel they are diverse and looking different ways. Those of Moses stood by the throne, and in token of humility veiled their faces and their feet with their wings (cf. Isa. vi. 2). Those of Ezekiel stand beneath the throne, supporting it, and in an attitude of readiness to obey the behests of the Almighty. This vision also differs from the similar one described in the Book of Revelations, the discrepancies there, however, being all explicable by the fact, that while the " living creatures " here are described as in motion, they are there stationary (cf. Rev. iv. 6-8).

R. JAMIESON.

SON OF MAN

Son of man.

Ezek. II. 1.

EZEKIEL had a profound sense of the majesty of Jehovah ; and the expression, which he uses upwards of ninety times, is no doubt intended to mark the distance which separated the prophet, as one of mankind, from Him.—S. R. DRIVER.

He was constituted to be a priest and a prophet to all mankind in the Temple of the Church Universal. Therefore God addresses him, not as son of Aaron, but as son of Adam. For the message he is called to deliver must be to the whole human race, not merely Israel.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

Lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that still he is a “son of man,” a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels, yet he must remember that he is himself a man ; “what is man, or the son of man,” that he should be thus visited, thus dignified ? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about His throne, that were ready to go on His errands, yet He passeth them all by, and pitcheth on Ezekiel, “a son of man,” to be His messenger. God’s messages are sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust ; it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. Whatever good he did, it was in the strength of Divine grace.—M. HENRY.

EAT THIS ROLL

*Eat this roll, and go, speak
unto the house of Israel.*

Ezek. III. 1.

digest it—let it be thy *nourishment* ; and let it be thy meat and drink to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven.—A. CLARKE.

Signs without words are vain. What fruit would there have been if the prophet had merely seen the vision, and no word of God had followed it?—CALVIN.

Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place ; we must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God. Admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it ; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate upon it ; take it as it is entire, and make no difficulty of it, nay take a pleasure in it as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it ; let it be meat and drink to thee.—M. HENRY.

The word, being ingenerated, doth require the prophet's greatest resolution and diligence. To "eat this roll" means to read it attentively, to meditate upon it thoroughly, and to take it deeply into thy soul, for it must be declared with great affection and tenderness, with exact faithfulness and fearless courage—it must be transformed into life and action.—M. POOLE.

The word of God must enter into the heart of the prophet, and be uttered not as a mere narration but as a quick and living doctrine.—DIODATI.

The words were not his own, but put into his mouth by the Lord.—G. CURREY.

A LITTLE SANCTUARY

Yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come.

Ezek. XI. 16.

WHAT made the temple at Jerusalem to be a *sanctuary*, or Holy Place, was the Presence and Glory of God. Wherever

these are, is a sanctuary ; where these are not, the most magnificent minster is only a splendid cenotaph. This truth was displayed in the removal of the Divine glory on the wings of the Cherubim from the Temple at Jerusalem to Chaldæa the land of the exiles ; which was a prophetic foreshadowing of the diffusion of the Divine Presence and Glory from the literal Sion to the Universal Church of Christ in all the world.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

A little one in opposition to the great, rich, splendid, and admired temple at Jerusalem, which helped them least when they needed it most ; but I will be, saith the Lord, what the temple promised for glory, defence, and worship.—M. POOLE.

They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God ; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. God “ will be a sanctuary to them,” i.e. a place of refuge ; to Him they shall flee, and in Him they shall be safe. They shall have the tokens of God’s presence with them, and His grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises. He “ will be a little sanctuary,” not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and an envious eye upon that house at Jerusalem which was high and great. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them. Observe the condescensions of Divine grace ; the great God will be a little sanctuary.—M. HENRY.

NOAH, DANIEL, AND JOB

Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter ; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Ezek. XIV. 20.

WHY are Noah, Daniel, and Job specified here ? The principal reason seems to be that Noah, Job, and Daniel were greatly beloved of God because they were eminent in righteousness and in holiness, although they lived in evil days, and although they did not

possess the advantages which Israel had. Noah had no written Revelation ; Job was not of the favoured seed of Abraham, but was a patriarch and prophet of the Gentile world ; Daniel was in exile at Babylon, a heathen and idolatrous capital, and was there engaged in the transaction of worldly affairs, which are apt to steal the soul from God. And they signally prevailed in *saving others*—Noah, in saving the human family ; Daniel, in saving the Chaldæan astrologers from destruction ; Job, in interceding for his friends. And these three are brought from countries and ages very remote from each other, as if God would cull the choicest flowers of piety of every time, even from the Flood to Ezekiel's own day, and weave them in a garland together ; and He says, " Though these three men were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God."

BP. WORDSWORTH.

The intercession even of the holiest of men shall not avert My judgments. Personal holiness alone can prevent these evils ; but the holiness of any man can only avail for himself, even though he be a Noah, Daniel or Job.—A. CLARKE.

SOUR GRAPES

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

Ezek. XVIII. 1.

PERSONALITY is the characteristic of Ezekiel.

C. H. CORNHILL.

His doctrine of the moral responsibility of individual souls is usually considered to be Ezekiel's most distinctive doctrine. It is important to

remember that this was an unfamiliar truth to the ancient world. Before the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "the prophets of individualism," it was thought that the individual could have no religion except as a member of the nation. Jeremiah corrected this error, and showed that each individual, in virtue of his manhood, could have personal fellowship with God. In like manner it was believed that a man's sins were shared by his contemporaries, ancestors, and descendants. It was Ezekiel who corrected this second error. Following up the teaching of Jeremiah to its logical conclusion, he declared that if the individual were admitted to the privilege of personal fellowship with God, he must also be prepared to stand on his own feet with respect to sin and unrighteousness. So strongly did Ezekiel feel this great truth of moral freedom and personal responsibility that he could not be simply, like his predecessors, God's spokesman to the nation. He has a message to the individual.

W. J. FARLEY.

In this chapter is set forth fully the doctrine of individual responsibility. The question is made to rest upon the fundamental proposition, All souls are mine. Man is not simply to ascribe his existence to earthly parents, but to acknowledge as his Father Him who

created man in His own image, and who gave and gives him the spirit of life. The relation of father to son is merged in the common relation of all, father and son alike, as sons to their Heavenly Father.—CURREY.

The statements here made are exposed to two difficulties : (1) that it is expressly declared in the second commandment that God does visit the sins of the fathers upon the children (Exod. xx. 5, xxxiv. 7 ; Deut. v. 9), and that all history shows that this is a law of His moral government of the world ; and (2) that it is by no means true that individual suffering and happiness are exactly proportioned in this world to individual character and conduct.

How, then, are the statements of this chapter to be justified ? In regard to the first difficulty, simply by remembering the twofold relation, the individual and the federal, in which each man stands to his Maker. Under the laws of nature it must necessarily come about that the children shall suffer or enjoy in consequence of the uprightness or the sin of their fathers. Yet more important, and prevailing above this federal relation, is the attitude of each individual towards God. By this, through the reconciliation effected by the redemption of Christ, he is brought into communion with God, and becoming one with Christ, is viewed and treated as a member of the body of the only begotten Son. This does not hinder that the laws of nature shall still work out their natural effects. Thus it is true that God does both visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, and at the same time does, through all, punish and reward each single person according to their own individual bearing towards Him. All alike belong to God. He loves and would save them all, and punishes only when it is deserved.—F. GARDINER.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

Ezek. XXXVII. 3.

THE bones, as the subsequent verses show, were not heaped together, but thickly strewn upon the face of the plain, and they were those not merely of dead, but of slain men. The question is put to the prophet in order to emphasise the human impossibility of that which is immediately brought about by the Divine omnipotence. It was precisely this teaching which the people needed. As they had formerly refused to believe his announcements of impending judgment, so now that this had come, they were utterly incredulous in regard to his declarations of future blessing. It seemed to them impossible, and what they needed to be taught was that "what is impossible with man is possible with God." The prophet sees the natural impossibility, yet perceives that there must be some deeper reason for the question, and therefore replies in these words. The restoration of the dry bones to life is described as taking place in two stages, with evident reference to the record of the creation of man in Gen. ii. 7. In the first, they are restored to perfect form, but yet without life; in the second, they become "living creatures."

F. GARDINER.

Ezekiel is not here writing expressly of the Resurrection; but, by means of a parable of the Resurrection, he is foretelling the Restoration of Israel, which was then captive at Babylon. The similitude of the Resurrection would never have been adduced by the Prophet in order to symbolise the Restoration of Israel, unless the Resurrection were a reality.—JEROME.

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

He brought me to the temple.

Ezek. XLI. 1.

THE remarkable vision detailed in this and the following chapters has engaged much attention in every age of the Church. Some maintain that it is a literal description of the temple of Solomon, which Ezekiel, who was a priest and had seen that splendid edifice, photographed from memory. Others suppose that it was a model which Ezekiel had by inspiration received of the second temple, and which, though intended to be followed by Zerubbabel after the return from captivity, the supine indolence, want of patriotism, or avarice of the restored Jews and their descendants prevented him from fully executing in the magnificent proportions designed in the Divine plan. It is fatal, however, to both these views, that not only do some of the details and specifications far exceed the known dimensions either of Solomon's or Zerubbabel's temple, but the hypotheses are at variance with the express declaration of the prophet that what he is about to relate was not the description of an actual temple, but of one which had been exhibited to him "in the visions of God." The modern Jews consider the vision a prophetic announcement of the restoration of the Jewish people to their own land, when their ancient polity in Church and State shall be re-established with all the surpassing interest and significance which Christianity will impart to their typical ritual, and they shall perform, as formerly, periodical pilgrimages to this magnificent temple described by Ezekiel, to be re-erected on the summit of Zion. Such a literal fulfilment of the prophecy not only violates probability, but even involves natural impossibilities. Not to dwell on the extremely

improbable restoration of the tribes, after the distinctions have been so long lost, and on the revival of the Judaic ceremonies which are done away with in Christ, the temple as here described exceeds, as Lightfoot has shown, all the earthly Jerusalem; the holy ground exceeds many times over the whole area of Mount Moriah, and Ezekiel's Jerusalem is larger than all the land of Canaan. For this and other reasons, all the most eminent writers in the Christian Church, the fathers, the reformers, as well as critics in modern times, reject the literal interpretation, and regard the vision as a typical representation of spiritual blessings—as, in short, a grand collective group of imagery connected with the Jewish worship, and including all the additions made on the successive temples in Jerusalem, to form a figure and emblem of the times of the Messiah, with the rich fullness of its blessings, the new sanctuary with the complete revelation of God for the salvation of His Church, the new worship, the new priesthood, and theocratic authority in the Church. That will be a temple of an unknown magnificence, which, though exhibited in vision, never could be substantiated in material walls—a pile of spiritual architecture, which will grace the millennial age, and constitute a “glorious Church.”

R. JAMIESON.

If anyone will take up the full circuit of the wall that encompassed the holy ground, according to our English measure, it will amount to half a mile and about one hundred and sixty-six yards. And whosoever likewise will measure the square of Ezekiel (xlii. 20), he will find it six times as large as this (xl. 5), the whole amounting to three miles and a half, and about one hundred and forty yards—a compass incomparably larger than Mount Moriah divers times over; and by this very thing is

shown that that is spiritually and mystically to be understood.

The description of the Temple and City that Ezekiel hath given in the end of his book, as it was a prediction of some good to come, so was that prediction true thus far, according to the very letter, namely, that there should be a Temple and a City newly built : and so it was a promise and a comfort to the people then in captivity, of their restoring again to their own land, and their enjoying Jerusalem and the Temple again, as they had done in former time, before their removing and captivating out of their own country. But as for a literal correspondency of that City and Temple to all the particulars of his description, it is so far from it, that his Temple is delineated larger than all the earthly Jerusalem. And thereby the scope of the Holy Ghost in that ichnography is clearly held out to be, to signify the great enlarging to the spiritual Jerusalem and Temple, the Church under the Gospel, and the spiritual beauty and glory of it.—J. LIGHTFOOT.

It revealed that the Church of God would revive at Sion in greater glory, and would become universal in time and place ; and that it would be filled with the glory of the Lord, which had quitted the material Temple ; and the name of the City would be, “ The Lord is there.” Ezekiel did in a fuller sense for the exiles of Chebar what was done in a later age by Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi for those who returned to Jerusalem. He consoled and cheered them with a vision of a Temple and City at Sion ; and he did more than this : he excited them to look forward from that material Temple and City to the Universal Church of Christ.

Hence it is that this Vision is inserted after the

description of the discomfiture of the army of Gog in chs. xxxviii. and xxxix., which symbolises the overthrow of the enemies of the Church. We have seen a vision of the destruction of the foes of the spiritual City ; we now behold here a vision of the City itself.

This Vision of Ezekiel occupies a middle place between the descriptions of the different fabrics which typified the Church of God ; namely the Ark of Noah, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, the Temple of Solomon, and the description of the Church glorified as revealed in the Apocalypse.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

Thus enveloped in clouds and darkness, thou hast, good reader, a conjecture of many things, which, I need not blush to confess, are more above mine own comprehension than above some others ; the mystical sense I refer to thy thoughts.—M. POOLE.

We have to notice the essentially moral character of all that was here displayed in vision respecting the future things of God's kingdom. It was not a pattern which God was going to carry out anyhow, and accomplish as by a simple fiat of Omnipotence. It depended upon the condition of the people, and only if they agreed to put sin away from among them, and give God the supreme place in their hearts, could He manifest Himself toward them in the manner described. While the whole scheme was fraught with lessons of instruction, and inlaid with principles of holiness, the grand and distinguishing peculiarity of this pattern of the future, as compared with the past, we are expressly informed, was to be a general and all-pervading sanctity. The law of the house consisted in the whole region of the temple-mount being most holy. Not, as hitherto, was this characteristic to be confined to a single apartment of the Temple ; it was to embrace the whole circum-

ference occupied by the symbolic institutions of the kingdom—the chambers allotted to the priest, and even the courts trodden by the people, as well as the immediate dwelling-place of Jehovah. All were to have one character of sacredness, because all connected with them were to occupy a like position of nearness to God, and equally to enjoy the privilege of access to Him.

P. FAIRBAIRN.

The glory of the God of Israel must take possession of the new sanctuary, as, in time past, of the tabernacle and of Solomon's Temple. But it is in a different form. The glory was of old veiled in a cloud resting on the mercy-seat of the ark between cherubim of carved wood, lifeless and motionless, as though the Mercy and Power of God were in some sort restricted to the material building and the people to whom it belonged. Now the glory appears in the form with which Ezekiel is familiar in all its symbolical significance; with light shining upon the earth, living creatures, wheels connecting heaven with earth so that the chariot looks and moves to every quarter, the firmament and the rainbow, the appearance of a man upon the throne, and his voice speaking to the children of men. A personal and living God enters the sanctuary, condescending to occupy it, not merely as a fixed dwelling-place, but as a centre from whence His Power and Mercy radiate freely to the utmost ends of the earth. Hence amid the detailed preparations of the house no mention is made of ark or mercy-seat, so important a part of the former sanctuary. The living cherubim, the firmament, and the rainbow of mercy, replace the cherubic figures and the golden chest.—KLIEFOTH.

We thus come to regard this prophecy as an ideal one on every ground, not looking for any literal and

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material fulfilment. If it should be asked, Why then is it given with such a wealth of minute material detail ? the answer is obvious, that this is thoroughly characteristic of Ezekiel. The tendency, strongly marked in every part of his book, merely culminates in this closing vision. The two previous chapters, especially, have abounded in concrete and definite details of the attack of a great host upon the land of Israel, while yet these very details have given evidence upon examination that they could not have been meant to be literally understood, and that the whole prophecy was intended to shadow forth the great and final spiritual conflict, prolonged through ages, between the power of the world and the kingdom of God. So here, the prophet, wishing to set forth the glory, the purity, and the beneficent influence of the Church of the future, clothes his description in those terms of the past with which his hearers were familiar. At the same time Ezekiel is careful to introduce among his details so many points that were impossible, or, at least, the literal fulfilment of which would have been strangely inconsistent with his main teaching, as to show that his description must be ideal, and that its realisation is to be sought for beneath the types and shadows in which it was clothed. His purpose was understood by his contemporaries, and by the generation immediately succeeding, so that they never made any attempt to carry out his descriptions in the rebuilding of the Temple and reconstitution of the State. The idea of a literal interpretation of his words was reserved for generations long distant from his time, from the forms of the Church under which he lived, and from the circumstances and habits of expression with which he was familiar, and under the influence of which he wrote.—F. GARDINER.

THE RIVER OF LIFE

Everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh.

Ezek. XLVII. 9.

ALL accounts combine in asserting that the water of the two pools of Siloam, as well as that of the many fountains of the mosque of Omar, proceeds from a living spring beneath the temple vaults. There was no period of its history when such a provision would not have been important to the temple for the ablutions of the Jewish, no less than of the Mussulman, worship. This image enters into the very heart of the prophetic idea of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel's vision the thought is expanded into a vast cataract, flowing out through the temple-rock eastward and westward, into the ravines of Hinnom and Kedron, till they swell into a mighty river, fertilising the desert of the Dead Sea. The prophet, in the temple court, sees the perennial spring of the Sacred Hill rising into a full and overflowing fountain beside the altar, and pouring forth a vast stream over the wide enclosure. He goes round to the Eastern gate of the temple, overhanging the defile of Kedron. The waters have reached the gateway, and are rushing in a cataract down into the valley below. Into the valley the prophet descends, and the waters rise higher and higher, till the dry course of Kedron becomes a mighty river ; and innumerable trees spring up along its sterile banks ; and through the deep defile and its tributary courses the waters issue out towards the " circles " of the Jordan ; they " go down " through all the long descent into the Arabah (the Ghor) or desert plain of Jordan, and reach " the sea." And when the stream—two currents, one, yet divided, as it rushes through the mountain passes—forces its way into that

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dead lake, "the waters shall be healed"; everywhere they shall teem with life; the living creatures washed by the Jordan into the sea, which else would die at once, shall live as the fresh stream touches them; there shall be a multitude of fish, even as "the fish of the great sea"—the Mediterranean; the fishermen standing all along its rocky shores, from Eneglaim to Engedi; only the marshes at its southern end, where the healing stream cannot penetrate, will still be given up to its old salt and barrenness.—DEAN STANLEY.

As the aim of the temple-sanctuary is sanctification, so that of the waters from the sanctuary is healing, so that sanctification and healing are the two leading theological thoughts dominating the whole closing part of Ezekiel.—SCHRÖDER.

Nothing is more common in the Holy Scriptures than to represent the influences of the Holy Spirit under the emblem of water; and, in perfect accordance with this remark, the spread of knowledge, truth, and righteousness is often expressed by the image of flowing streams—streams that, uniting and continuing to spread, we are led to believe shall cover the earth with the knowledge and glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the basin of the sea.—T. SCOTT.

It has been objected to the spiritual interpretation of this vision, that under it nothing can be made of the fishermen of ver. 10, and that, therefore, the whole is to be considered as a glorification of nature in the future Palestine. But this is to forget that in every figure and parable there are, and must be, details necessary to the figure which have nothing answering to them in the thing signified, and that it is the habit of Ezekiel to carry out such details very far. In this case, the mention of the fishermen heightens the imagery.—F. GARDINER.

DANIEL

AMONG THE PROPHETS

*Daniel had understanding in
all visions and dreams.*

Dan. I. 17.

WE require almost to apologise for introducing Daniel into the same cluster of prophets with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. And this, not because it is rich enough without him, still less that he is not worthy of the conjunction, but that he seems at first to belong to a different order of men. They were prophets, and little else ; he was a chief counsellor in a great empire. They seem to have been poor, solitary, and wandering men, despised and rejected ; he was the favourite of monarchs. Their predictions exposed them to danger and shame ; his “ dreams ” drew him aloft to riches and honour. They were admitted now and then among princes, because they were prophets ; but his power of prophecy made him a prince. Their predictions came generally naked to their waking eyes—they were day-dreams ; but his were often softened and shaded by the mist of sleep. And yet we do feel justified in putting the well-conditioned and gold-hung Daniel beside the gaunt, hungry, and wild-eyed sons of the prophets we have just been picturing. Souls, and dark piercing eyes expressing similar souls, are kindred, whether they burn 'neath the brows of beggars or of kings.

But all dreams, which ever waved rapture over the brow of youthful genius, dreaming of love or heaven, or which ever distilled poison on the drugged and desperate repose of unhappy bard or philosopher, who has experienced the “ pains of sleep,” or cried aloud, as he awoke in struggles, “ I shall sleep no more,” must yield, in magnitude, grandeur, and comprehensiveness, to the dreams which Daniel expounded or saw. They are all

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colossal in size, as befitted dreams dreamed in the palaces of Babylon. No ears of corn, blasted or flourishing—no kine, fat or lean—appear to Daniel ; but here stands up a great image, with head of gold, breast of silver, belly of brass, and feet of iron, mingled with mire clay ; and there waves a tree, tall as heaven, and broad as earth. Here, again, as the four winds are striving upon the ocean, four monstrous forms emerge, and there appears the throne of the Ancient of Days, with all its appurtenances of majesty and insignia of justice. Empires, religions, the history of time, the opening gateways of eternity, are all spanned by those dreams. No wonder that monarchs sprang up trembling and troubled from their sight, and that one of them changed the countenance of the prophet, as years of anguish could not have done.

They are recounted in language grave, solemn, serene. The poetry of Daniel lies rather in the objects presented, than in the figures or the language of the description. The vehemence, pathos, or fury which, in various measures, characterised his brethren, are not found in him. A calm, uniform dignity distinguishes all his actions and words. It forsakes not his brow even while he is astonished for one hour in the presence of the monarch. It enters with him as he enters, awful in holiness, into the hall of Belshazzar's feast. It sits over him in the lions' den, like a canopy of state ; and it sustains his style to its usual even exalted pitch in describing the session of the Ancient of Days.

Perhaps the greatest grandeur of Daniel's prophecy arises from its frequent glimpses of the Coming One. This vision at once interpenetrates and overtops all the rest.—G. GILFILLAN.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

Belshazzar the king made a great feast.

Dan. V. 1.

THE festival was a service of worship to their god ; and not only was religion used as a plea for sensual indulgence,

but sensual indulgence was a part of it. When all the preparations for the siege were made, Cyrus determined to wait for the arrival of a certain festival, during which the whole population were wont to engage in drinking and revelling ; and then silently in the dead of night to turn the water of the river and make the attack. All fell out as he hoped and wished. The festival was held with even greater pomp and splendour than usual, for Belshazzar, with the insolence of youth, abandoned himself to the delights of the season, and entertained a thousand lords in his palace. The rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing. Riot and mad excitement held possession of the city : the siege was forgotten, ordinary precautions were neglected, the river gates were left open. Following the example of their king, the Babylonians gave themselves up for the night to orgies in which religious frenzy and drunken excess formed a strange medley. According to Herodotus, Babylon was taken by Cyrus, and at a festival celebrated at night ; and Xenophon describes the monarch who was actually at Babylon at that time as a young man addicted to revelry, and relates that he was slain at the festival celebrated by him.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

Though this handwriting upon the wall was the doom of Belshazzar, it is with the earlier, less terrible warnings that I have to do ; the warnings full of gentleness and mercy, which tell us of destruction which is still

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distant, which bid us seek refuge while there is time to fly. Those warnings are always written on the palace wall of life. But is it not literally an everyday experience that an inscription always before the eyes is little heeded? I imagine that the ancient Athenians paid little heed to the moral sentences which were carved upon the Hermæ in every street. And just in the same way do we not, all of us alike, often thus neglect and forget the notices of God? Yes; and that is why in dealing with us He is obliged, now and then, to *make* us see them—to force their meaning into us—to interpret them again, when the dimmed wall has been painted over with other symbols, and familiarity has made them meaningless to eyes that will not see.

These reminders from God, of truths which we have forgotten, come sometimes very terribly; not whispered, but shouted—not shouted only, but cut deep—not only cut deep before the eyes, but branded in letters of fire upon the soul. When sickness is the debt due to sinful youth; when the loss of the last chance brings home to us the sense of the squandered opportunity; when the cold light of heaven, bursting through the drawn curtains of the hypocrite, shows him to himself and to others, not as he wished to be thought, but as he is; then it is that God puts forth the fingers of a man's hand, and His inscription, once unheeded, flashes into letters of fire. So that what I have been trying to urge on you is to read those milder warnings, to listen to those stiller, smaller voices, which come to us, not at some terrible crisis, but at quiet moments. Those words, written once in the palace of Belshazzar, are for us written for ever in the house of life; and each one, in his own heart, may still read the fateful words.—F. W. FARRAR.

THE MIRACLES OF DANIEL

*My God hath sent his angel,
and hath shut the lions'
mouths.*

IT is alleged by some that we find in Daniel an aimless profusion of miracles. Of

Dan. VI. 22. what use was it to Nebuchadnezzar to know who would be his successors, or to be acquainted with the revolutions that were to take place afterwards in his monarchy? Was it worth such a manifold variety of miracles to satisfy his political curiosity? What was the object of making known to Belshazzar by a writing which no one but Daniel could read that the Medes and Persians were to be masters of his capital?—BERTHOLDT.

The aim of the narratives in the Book of Daniel is not hidden; that Jehovah is mightier than all the gods of the heathen; that He alone determines the destinies of the kingdoms of the world; that those who in wicked pride exalt themselves above Jehovah, and afflict His beloved people, are not allowed by Him to go unpunished; this is constantly repeated, not merely as occasion might call for it, but designedly.—GRIESINGER.

Some have objected to "the objectless prodigality of miracles in the Book of Daniel; which, as miracles, are improbable, and rest on incorrect statements." The "prodigality" of miracles of power, as distinct from the miracle of superhuman knowledge, consists in this, that in seventy years, *three* miracles are recorded—the deliverance of Daniel's three friends in the furnace, of Daniel himself in the lions' den, and the miraculous handwriting in the midst of the idolatrous feast. "Objectless" they can only seem to those to whom all revelation of God seems to be objectless. It was a grand theatre. On the one side was the world-monarchy,

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irresistible, conquering, as the heathen thought, the God of the vanquished. On the other, a handful of the worshippers of the One only God, captives, scattered, with no visible centre of unity, without organisation or power to resist, save their indomitable faith, inwardly upheld by God, outwardly strengthened by the very calamities which almost ended their national existence ; for they were the fulfilment of His Word, in whom they believed. Thrice, during the seventy years, human power put itself forth against the Faith ; twice in edicts which would, if obeyed, have extinguished the true faith on earth ; once in direct insult to God. Faith, as we know, “ quenched the violence of fire,” and “ stopped the mouths of lions ” (Heb. xi. 33, 34). In all three cases, the assault was signally rolled back ; the Faith was triumphant in the face of all the representatives of the Power and Intelligence of the Empire : in all, the Truth of the One God was proclaimed by those who had assailed it. Unbelief, while it remains such, must deny all true miracles and all superhuman prophecy. But, if honest, it dare not designate as “ objectless,” miracles which decided the truth on such battlefields.

DR. PUSEY.

It was certainly most fitting (if the maintenance of the true religion among the people of the covenant, the necessary condition of the appearance of the Messiah, was of any importance) that the weakness of their faith should be assisted even by sensible means of support, and that the Omnipotence of the true God should be made known in a striking manner in what was actually visible ; so that the elevation of Daniel by these miraculous events to the highest dignities in the heathen court might serve as a sign and a pledge of the approaching exaltation of the whole people.—HENSTENBERG.

THE VISIONS OF DANIEL

*A vision appeared unto me,
even unto me Daniel.*

Dan. VIII. 1.

IN studying the Book of Daniel it is of the utmost importance to recognise its apocalyptic character. It is at once an end and a beginning, the last form of prophecy and the first "philosophy of history." The nation is widened into the world: the restored kingdom of Judah into a universal kingdom of God.

To the old prophets Daniel stands, in some sense, as a commentator (Dan. ix. 2-19); to succeeding generations, as the Seer. The eye and not the ear is the organ of the Seer; visions and not words are revealed to him. The seer takes his stand in the future rather than in the present.

At the basis of all prophecy lies the great idea of a cyclic development of history. Great periods appear to be marked out in the fortunes of mankind which answer to another, so that that Divine utterance which receives its first fulfilment in one period, receives a further and more complete fulfilment in the corresponding part of some later period. Thus chs. viii.-xii. trace the fortunes of the people of God, as typical of the fortunes of the Church in all ages. The conflict has a typical import, and foreshows in characteristic outlines the abiding and final conflict of the people of God and the powers of evil. The work of the interpreter must be to determine historically the nature of each event signalized in the prophetic picture, that he may draw from the past the lesson for the future. In this way the book remains a "prophecy," while it is also a "revelation"; and its most special predictions acquire an abiding significance.—B. F. WESTCOTT.

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Daniel saw the great pageant of history moving onwards, while nation after nation climbed to the seat of power ; but at the end he declared that all these must pass away and the Kingdom of God be set up. The triumph of the Kingdom is the goal of history. In contrast with the bestial kingdoms of the heathen, this final kingdom is to be human and spiritual ; and " coming on the clouds of heaven," in contrast with the nations that " rose out of the sea," it is to be ushered in by God's own power, and not by any earthly violence or force.

Looking back over these visions we see how gloriously this prophet bore his witness to the certainty of Jehovah's victory, and how triumphantly his faith was vindicated. Doubtless he thought the Kingdom would come as soon as Antiochus was overthrown. But in this he was only like all his predecessors, like Isaiah, who thought of the child Immanuel as already conceived ; or Haggai or Zechariah, who hoped so much from Zerubbabel. They saw the promise, and hailed it from afar, and their faith destroyed time and annihilated distances. But each in his own day declared with new emphasis the witness of Israel, that God's Kingdom must prevail.

W. J. MOULTON.

Chronological considerations are to be used with great caution in interpreting visions. The scenes which are presented to the eye of the prophet only represent states and conditions of that to which they relate, and are not usually exhibited with a special view to chronology.

J. M. FULLER.

There is indicated towards the end of visions of Daniel a melting away as it were of the things of time, and a transition to the things of eternity. They are left as a precious possession to the Church of Christ.

J. H. ROSE.

THE CHARACTER OF DANIEL

Thou man greatly beloved.

Dan. X. 11.

THE entire absence of self-consciousness seems to us a fundamental element in the noble character of Daniel. Vanity would have marred everything. Perhaps it would not have occurred to us to note this trait, had not the very opposite been charged against him. There can be no doubt that self-obtrusion is alike unlovely, and to the subject of it fraught with great peril. The constant exhibition, in every spoken or written word, of the " I " ; the evident living on the breath of popular approbation, the object being to secure a fair show of seeming good, instead of solid and permanent worth : all this tends to ensure misery to the man, offence to others, and the destruction of all that might have otherwise been great and good. It is one form of that self-centredness in which, not without reason, the very essence of sin has been said to consist. Daniel was singularly free from this fundamental vice of character.

Conceive any mere human writer, occupying such a position as Daniel had, a chief adviser of a great monarch, and a great protector, doubtless, of his people, saying not one word of all the trials, plans, counsels of these seventy years ; nothing of the good which he furthered, or the evil which he hindered ! Could we have a more complete instance of self-abnegation ? Such silence is indeed golden. To take but one illustration : in the account of the golden image, Daniel retires from all observation. Attention is concentrated on the spectacle itself, and then on the gradual development of the tragedy connected with it. The historian is silent as to the part he played, if any ; on the assumption that

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he had no place in those dread transactions, wonderful is his reticence as to all apology or explanation ; thus teaching us to live less in ourselves, more in others, and most of all in God.—E. B. PUSEY.

It was this love of God which made His greatly beloved Daniel prosperous in adversity, that gave him freedom in captivity, friendship among enemies, safety among infidels, victory over his conquerors, and all the privileges of a native in strange countries. It was this love of God that gave His “greatly beloved, knowledge and skill in all learning, and wisdom and understanding in all visions and dreams.” It was this love of God that delivered him in dangers ; from the conspiracy and malice of the Median princes, and from the fury of the lions ; that sent an angel into the den to stop their mouths ; that signally revenged him of his enemies, and did by a miracle vindicate his integrity. It was the love of God which gave him the spirit of prophecy, that excellent spirit, that “Spirit of the Holy Gods,” as the Babylonians styled it, by which he foretold the rise and period of the Four Monarchies, the return of the Captivity, and wrote long beforehand the affairs of future ages. But beyond all this, it was the love of God that presented him with a clearer landscape of the Gospel than any other prophet ever had. Daniel was the beloved prophet under the Old Dispensation, as John was the beloved disciple under the New, and both being animated with the same Divine Love, there was a wonderful harmony between them : both had the like intimacy with God, the like admittance into the most adorable mysteries, and the like abundance of heavenly visions ; both had the like lofty flights, and ecstatic revelations.—BP. KEN.

CRITICAL STUDIES
OF THE
MAJOR PROPHETS
BY
H. WHEELER ROBINSON, D.D.,
AND
W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

THE
THIRD
STUDY

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

BY

H. WHEELER ROBINSON, D.D.

The Rev. H. Wheeler Robinson, M.A. (Edin. and Oxon.), D.D. (Edin.), is the Principal of Regent's Park College (London and Oxford); author of *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, *The Cross of the Servant* (Isa. xl.-lv.), etc.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

BY H. WHEELER ROBINSON, D.D.

THE Book of Isaiah is a Bible in miniature, for it is a collection of literature extending over some four centuries ; through its pages we can see Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century, the unknown evangelist of the exile in the sixth, the struggles of life and faith against disillusionment in the fifth, and, finally, something of that "apocalyptic" into which prophecy at length passed.

I. Isaiah himself continues the message of Amos, but on a higher level of majesty ; the God of righteousness now becomes the Holy One of Israel. Isaiah's background is the Assyrian Empire, revived under Tiglath-Pileser IV, and the prophet was keenly observant of the reduction of the Syrian States, including the northern kingdom of Israel, by the Assyrian power. But he was much more than a politician, as the chapter (vi.) describing his call so amply shows. The vision of Yahweh in the temple-courts awakens him to the sinfulness of himself and his people, and stirs him to the prophetic mission of denunciation. This was in 740, whilst Isaiah was still a young man, for his work extends to the end of the century. Some of his prophecies concern the northern kingdom (e.g. ix. 8—x. 4, with v. 25—30), and his relation to Israel comes out in the dramatic scene of the seventh chapter, belonging to the time of the attack made upon Judah by Israel and Damascus (735). Isaiah faces the king, speaks contemptuously of the allied enemies, declares their coming overthrow, and asks for confidence in the presence of Yahweh with Judah. The prophet even

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offers to give some sign that his words are true ; when the king shrinks from this, Isaiah declares that within a few months parents shall be naming their children " God with us," because of the accomplished deliverance from Ephraim and Syria. Isaiah in effect says, " Leave all to Yahweh, for Assyria itself is in His hand " (x. 5 f.). So in 711, when Judah was relying on the help of Egypt and Ethiopia against Assyria (xx.), Isaiah walked the streets of Jerusalem half-clad and without sandals, to symbolise the fate (as captives) of these supposed helpers. So, again, in 701, Isaiah shows his confidence that Yahweh will protect Jerusalem from the besieging Assyrians. This faith rests throughout on the transcendent and holy majesty of Yahweh, who is Spirit and not flesh (xxx. 1-3), and in the strength of it he bids the Ethiopian envoys return home (xviii. 1-7), for Yahweh looks down upon His people, undisturbed and undismayed. Isaiah is the first to make an explicit demand for faith as the essential condition of well-being. In the interview with Ahaz he utters the great word, " If ye have not faith, ye shall not be established " (vii. 9). Towards the close of his life we find the same emphasis, " He who has faith (in the sure foundation of Yahweh's relation to His people) shall not take hasty flight " (xxviii. 16). In a natural development of this emphasis, Isaiah is apparently the first to gather round him a group of believing disciples, and so to create a Church, a religious society, in place of the national group (viii. 16).

If faith is the great quality required of man, pride and arrogance are the sins that most surely provoke the wrath of " the day of Yahweh " (ii. 10-17). They are seen in the materialism of wealth and the futility of idolatry, and the essence of sin is in the pride of

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rebellion against Yahweh (i. 2). In this rebellious attitude Isaiah sees the working of what a Greek or Roman would trace to the goddess Nemesis, who cares for the due proportion of human life and affairs and punishes the boastfulness of prosperity.

II. With ch. xl. we find ourselves in a new world. Gone is Assyria, with its overshadowing empire ; gone are Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib, with their ever-threatening hosts of warriors. But gone too are the Kings of Judah, who trembled and plotted in their shadow, and the very Temple where Isaiah of Jerusalem saw a light that chased that shadow away. Israel is in exile, a homeless people, needing and receiving the comfort of the hope of restoration, instead of stern rebuke and the vision of a day of doom. The oppressive empire from which she longs to be delivered is now Babylon, and Babylon with the shadow falling on *her*, instead of on Israel. On the near horizon is seen a world-conqueror, who is explicitly named—Cyrus (xliv. 28, xlv. 1-5 ; cf. xli. 2-4, xlv. 13, xli. 25). What was more likely than that a change in the fortunes of the Jewish people was at hand ? But the nameless prophet of the exile was much more than an observant patriot. In the spirit of Isaiah and Jeremiah, whose pupil he was, he looked past the brilliant warrior to a greater Power. Cyrus the Persian, like Sennacherib the Assyrian and Nebuchadrezzar the Babylonian, was no more to him than an instrument in the hand of Yahweh. The fortunes of Israel, utterly insignificant as they might seem compared with the imperial destinies of Cyrus, became the ultimate purpose of his dazzling success. Yahweh was giving him victory that he might give liberty to Yahweh's people. Though he might not know it, his supreme glory was to become the

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“anointed” of Israel’s God for this great mission (xliv. 1).

To this new background corresponds the new message of the prophet we call Deutero- (that is, “Second”) Isaiah, whose series of poems (instead of the “oracles” of Isaiah) extend over the next sixteen chapters (xl.—lv.). His message is bathed in an atmosphere of glowing idealism, especially in its first half (xl.—xlviii.). Here, more than anywhere else in the Old Testament, the landscape owes everything to the sunshine that plays upon it, the joyous sunshine of the renewed sense of the presence of God, comforting His people in grace and power, and willing to transform their past sufferings into the glory of a divine purpose. The winter of exile is, for the prophet, already past ; he feels the joy of a new spring, the joy of a new vision of divine purpose. This is the poetry of passion—not the passion of the bridegroom for the bride, but of the bridegroom’s friend, rejoicing greatly because of the voice of the divine Bridegroom who says to Israel, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee” (liv. 7). The prophet joyfully imagines the climax of the glad procession across the desert, when messengers run ahead to tell of its coming, and those who have been left in the ruins of Jerusalem crowd to look out across the wilderness (lii. 7–9). The sin of the past, of which those ruins are the eloquent monument, is over and done with, doubly compensated, remembered no more (xlv. 22). Why then does the despondent Israel say, “My way is hidden from Yahweh, and my right hath been let slip by my God” ? (xl. 27).

The consolation of this new hope springs directly from the new conception of God. Israel’s comfort is

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secure, because Yahweh is what He is. For the first time in the religion of Israel, we meet with explicit and declared monotheism ; all through these chapters there runs the often repeated refrain, " there is none beside Me " (xliv. 6, etc.). Hence comes the satirical polemic against the folly of idolatry (xliv. 9 f., cf. xlv. 1, 2). Judaism anticipates the watchword of Islam : " There is no God but Yahweh, and Israel is His prophet." The divine omnipotence, on which the hope of deliverance is based, is urged by Deutero-Isaiah in three principal respects—the creation of the world, the control of history, the divine knowledge of the future. The first is illustrated magnificently in the rhetorical questions of the fortieth chapter (vss. 12 f., 25, 26), or in the creation of oases in the desert for the returning pilgrims (xli. 18, 19). The second is seen, for example, in the divine judgment against Babylon, " the lady of kingdoms " of the forty-seventh chapter, or in the comparison of the peoples of the earth with the grass that withers before the hot blast of summer (xl. 6-8). The third is expressed in the repeated challenge to other faiths to do what the prophet so confidently does in Yahweh's name—to declare the coming things (xli. 23, xlii. 9, etc.).

To make this God known to all the world is Israel's unique mission, expressed in the individualised portrait of the nation as the " Servant of Yahweh " ; and this portraiture is most impressive in a series of four related, though now separated, " Songs." In the first of these (xlii. 1-4) the Servant is the patient teacher of true religion to all the world. In the second (xlix. 1-6) we hear of the divine equipment of the Servant for this world-mission. In the third (l. 4-9) the Servant is represented as suffering, yet steadfast in pursuit of this

mission. In the fourth (lii. 13—liii. 12) we see the future vindication of the Servant set against the background of his present suffering, and we learn that this suffering is vicarious—it has sacrificial value for the nations of the world, who through it as an offering now approach Yahweh in penitence. This most remarkable of portraits is so strongly individualised in the four Songs that many scholars have explained it as really that of some outstanding individual, and not of Israel as a nation, which is undoubtedly the Servant elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah (xli. 8). But against this we must remember the Semitic tendency to particularise, as in the parallel portrait of Jerusalem as an abandoned and then restored wife (liv. 1–8), where a whole city is individualised in a remarkable way, and details are given that would never have been suggested to ourselves. Further, the tendency to gather a social group into a single figure was greatly helped by the ancient doctrine of corporate personality, the doctrine illustrated in St. Paul's conception of Adam as summarising the race. This doctrine also helps us to understand how the new conception of Israel's vicarious suffering could be reached—the most important theological point in the Book of Isaiah. Israel, said the prophet, had received at Yahweh's hand double for all her sins (xl. 2). What, then, was to be the interpretation of this excessive suffering of the exile and apparent destruction of the nation? The answer given by the prophet—that the suffering is not for Israel's sins, but as a sacrificial offering for the sins of other nations—is one of the great contributions of the Old Testament to that problem so often in the thought of Israel, the suffering of the innocent. The New Testament interpretation of the Cross of Jesus Christ appropriates this idea of Israel

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as the vicarious sufferer, and finds its fulfilment in Him (Acts viii. 30 f.). At the same time, the former corporate conception remains in the Pauline idea of the Church as the Body of Christ, whose members fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ (Col. i. 24).

III. The capture of Babylon in 538 was followed by a partial return of Jewish exiles to Palestine, in accordance with the policy of Cyrus towards other deported peoples. But the glowing hopes of Deutero-Isaiah, that this "return" would have international importance in vindicating the God of Israel before the nations, were certainly not fulfilled. The last eleven chapters of the Book of Isaiah seem chiefly to belong to the fifth century, from the "return" to the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. They appear to be by different hands and written at different times; the unity of Deutero-Isaiah is conspicuously lacking. Proselytes and eunuchs are welcomed to the community of Israel (lvi. 1-8); hostile nations are bidden to attack Israel, whose rulers are incompetent, whilst good men die (lvi. 9—lvii. 2); a community, apparently living in Palestine,¹ is bitterly attacked for its futile heathenism (lvii. 3-13); Yahweh promises His presence with the devout, and peace to the near and far, i.e. those in Jerusalem and exiles in other lands (lvii. 14-21); a demand for spiritual instead of ritual fasting, and for social brotherhood, so that Yahweh may bless and the waste places may be built (lviii.); denunciation of the people's sins, on confession of which Yahweh manifests Himself (lix.); a vivid description of the restoration and future glory of Zion, quite in the spirit

¹ The half-heathen population of North Israel, with whom the later "Samaritans" (after about 330) are connected.

of Deutero-Isaiah, and ascribed by some scholars to him (lx.—lxii.); a dramatic picture of Yahweh as a blood-stained warrior, coming back from executing vengeance on Edom (lxiii. 1-6); a liturgy of thanksgiving, petition and confession, implying that the temple is still unbuilt (lxiii. 7—lxiv.); vengeance on heathen, the happiness of Yahweh's people, scorn for a rival temple (the Samaritan?), the fate of evil-doers, made a spectacle for the righteous (lxv., lxvi.). It will be seen how miscellaneous are the contents of this portion of the Book, which has come to be known for convenience as "Trito-Isaiah," though without any necessary assumption of its unity of authorship. So far as the evidence goes, the historical and social and geographical background seems to be that of Palestine at this period. We seem to see a struggling community in Jerusalem before the work of Nehemiah and Ezra, with the two factions of the pro-heathen or (later) Samaritan party who would combine various rites with the worship of Yahweh, and a Puritan party, going back to the influence of Ezekiel. The broad and generous outlook to the nations seen in Deutero-Isaiah is wanting (except in lx.—lxii.).

IV. The fourth and last considerable section of the Book of Isaiah is the apocalypse to be found in xxiv.—xxvii. This is a "booklet" complete in itself, of the general character of Daniel (vii.—xii.) and the New Testament "Revelation," and apparently belonging to about 300 B.C. As prophecy slowly expired, it bequeathed its faith in the imminence of divine judgment to a new kind of literature, the apocalyptic, in which the unfulfilled prophecies of the past are seen as fulfilled. The chief differences are that the emphasis comes increasingly to lie on a future and supra-mundane state,

that the authorship is definitely pseudonymous, and that a wider expanse of history is exhibited as controlled by Yahweh. The example of such apocalypse now before us is the earliest we have, apart from apocalyptic passages in such later prophets as Ezekiel and Joel. It tells of the coming world-judgment (xxiv. 1-20) in which the city of chaos is to be overthrown ; not only the kings of earth, but also their patron-angels, the stars of heaven, are imprisoned with a view to their later punishment (xxiv. 21-22). Yahweh then begins to reign in Zion in visible glory (xxiv. 23), and celebrates His coronation-festival, removing the sorrow of *all* the peoples of the earth by the abolition of death (xxv. 6-8). During the period of active wrath, Yahweh's people withdraw into safety (xxvi. 20—xxvii. 1). Finally, the trumpet sounds to recall the Jews of the Dispersion to Jerusalem (xxvii. 12-13). Into this general framework of more or less conventional apocalyptic, four songs seem to have been interpolated (xxv. 1-5, 9-12, xxvi. 1-19, xxvii. 2-6). We may call this kingdom of God on earth " Messianic " provided we recognise that there is no Messiah. The points of chief interest in this apocalypse are the emergence of the doctrine of resurrection for the first time in the Old Testament (xxvi. 19), the nearest parallel being Daniel xii. 2 (165 B.C.), and the very remarkable expression of a catholic universalism, transcending all the limits of Jewish nationalism, which is found in the account of Yahweh's coronation-festival. We seem to see the great King rising to greet the long procession of suffering and sorrowing humanity, which wears the veil of the mourner. His royal hand removes the veil and wipes away the tears, and destroys their cause for ever (xxv. 6-8).

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500—450. Trito-Isaiah lvi.—lxvi.

c. 300. Apocalypse xxiv.—xxvii.

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THE BOOKS OF JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL
AND DANIEL

BY

W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

The Rev. W. F. Lofthouse, M.A., D.D., is the Principal of Handsworth College, Birmingham. Among his writings are a Commentary on Ezekiel (*Century Bible*), *Jeremiah and the New Covenant*, *The Making of the Old Testament*, *The Prophet of Reconstruction* (Ezekiel).

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

BY W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

OF all the heroes and saints of the Old Testament, we can know Jeremiah the best. We can grow as intimate with him as with St. Paul ; indeed, some would hold that we can go farther along the road of acquaintance with Jeremiah than with the central figure of the Acts of the Apostles. Yet this is seldom suspected ; for the contents of the book that goes by his name are in what appears to be a hopeless tangle.

After a narrative of the prophet's call, there are five chapters of denunciation, with nothing to show their object or their occasion. After what reads like the report of a speech or sermon (ch. vii.), this denunciation is continued to the end of ch. x. Then follow ten chapters of further preaching, of various events in the prophet's life, and of certain conversations which he is represented as holding with Jehovah. Then at last we reach something like solid ground with a reference to the reign of King Zedekiah, only to find that it is followed by what belongs to the previous reign, of Jehoiakim (xxi.—xxix.). Next comes a prophecy or series of prophecies, foretelling return from Exile and renewal of Jehovah's favour (xxx.—xxxix.), after which we find ourselves in Jerusalem during its final siege under Zedekiah ; then back again under Jehoiakim (xxxv.—xxxvi.). Eight chapters follow, concluding the story of the siege and pursuing Jeremiah into Egypt, after which we learn no more of him. At the close of the book comes a series of prophecies against foreign nations (xli.—li.), introduced (xlv.) and rounded off (li. 59-64) with short episodes from

Jeremiah's earlier career ; while the book concludes with a quite independent account of the fall of Jerusalem, almost identical with what meets us in the Book of Kings, with one section added from some other source (lii. 28-30). In addition to this, some parts of the book are in poetry, and poetry of a high order ; others in plain narrative prose ; and while certain sections are in the first person, as if Jeremiah were writing his autobiography, others are in the third. Plainly the book has had a history, and an unhappy one. Can we reconstruct it ?

But first, it will be convenient to recall the actual facts of Jeremiah's lifetime. Judging from ch. i., he must have been born about 645 B.C. ; at that time, Assyria, hitherto the paramount power in the Near East, was beginning to decline, and all the smaller peoples were wondering whether their independence could be regained. Josiah, the young King of Judah, took a bold step in this direction in the year 621, by a reformation that had at once (as was inevitable in the society of that day) a social and a religious character. Its outcome was to centralise religious ceremonial and political influence in the capital, and it seems for an interval to have united the whole nation. But it led ultimately to disaster. True, in nine years' time Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, fell ; but immediately Egypt and Babylon began quarrelling over her vast possessions. It was necessary for the smaller nations to take sides. Josiah opposed Egypt, and fell at Megiddo in 608. For another twenty years Jerusalem maintained a precarious semi-independence. Babylon quickly gained the upper hand over Egypt ; but the Judæan politicians, in spite of repeated disappointments, set their hopes on Egypt, only to find their city

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besieged and taken by Babylon, first in 597, when the flower of its population was removed into exile, though some independence was still left to the "rump" left behind; and in 586, when the city was at last destroyed. A few Jews were left in the country round Jerusalem; but after internal dissensions, some of these migrated hurriedly to Egypt, dragging the unwilling Jeremiah with them; and Jewish history becomes a blank till the revival of national life and hope in Judæa in the time of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Into this framework of events, which we can construct chiefly from the narratives in the Second Book of Kings and the parallel Babylonian documents, we can fit in with some assurance the main details of the life of Jeremiah. He came of a family of priests, living in the country outside Jerusalem. For all the sights and sounds and life of the country he had a deep affection, and he felt all the Puritan's hatred of the corruption of social life in the city. The first five years of his prophetic activity were spent in a vigorous attack on the wickedness of the nation, edged by warnings of a Scythian invasion—which threatened but did not actually take place. He appears to have at first supported the reforms of Josiah, directed as they were (at least in part) against the semi-pagan practices of the country shrines; but he was speedily disillusioned. There is nothing from him that we can place definitely between the reforms and the end of Josiah's reign; but when, after the brief interlude of the reign of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim came to the throne, Jeremiah at once protested with all the force of his fiery nature against the religious and political reaction which then set in.

As a result, he was imprisoned and partly silenced;

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but his imprisonment led to an event which really marked an epoch. With the help of his friend and "secretary" Baruch, he set down large parts of the prophecies he had previously delivered in a roll (xxxvi.), which thus became the nucleus of his own book and the starting-point for all the body of written Hebrew prophecy. At the deportation that followed the first capture of the city, in which another young priest, Ezekiel, was carried off to Mesopotamia with the rest, Jeremiah was left behind. His position was now different. Zedekiah, without Jehoiakim's strength, or obstinacy, still looked with his advisers for help from the Nile. He could not, however, shake off a measure of respect for the prophet, but he never dared to follow the prophet's bidding; and when at last for the second time Jerusalem was beleaguered, Jeremiah, as a pro-Babylonian "defeatist," was again imprisoned. With the capture of the city he was set free, and the last melancholy chapter of his life has been already referred to.

He has often been called the "weeping prophet"; this is because of the traditional attribution of the Book of Lamentations to his pen. For this, however, there is no evidence, and there is very much to the contrary. His nature was indeed a curious mixture of timidity, tenderness, and pugnacity. At his call (i.) he pleaded that he was but a child, and could not take up an attitude of independent and fierce criticism; but he was bidden by the divine voice to steel himself, and he certainly did so. In all the prophecies that we can date, before and after the nine silent years, the mood of denunciation is habitual. Perhaps it was increased by this natural timidity. Did he know that if he once allowed himself to relax, his spirit would quail before

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the reckless politicians of the city and the opposition of his own family? Yet at times he did relax; he can be overheard longing that his eyes were an unfailing spring of tears for the miseries of his people (ix. 1, xiv. 17); as we shall see in a moment, there was a time when he envisaged a brighter future; and even when his tone was at its sternest, he is still the lover of the country, he notices and dwells on the movements of animals and birds. While he knows that he is condemned to solitude and celibacy, he longs for the "voice of the bridegroom and the bride," and his ideal for the future is the simple and prosperous village life that once breathed through Longfellow's Acadie.

Every prophet is conscious of announcing the "word of Jehovah"; and the typical utterances in the earlier prophets seem to have been for the most part simple and oracular and disconnected. But there are two features in Jeremiah that must be noticed. The first is his symbolism. Other prophets have performed symbolic acts in the course of their ministry (Isaiah, and more habitually Ezekiel); but about Jeremiah there is always something individual. The incidents of the ruined linen waist-cloth (xiii.), the visit to the potter's shop (xviii.), the breaking of the bottle in the Vale of Topheth (xix.), and the plunging of a prophetic book into the Euphrates (li.) suggest a comparison with the two incidents connected with his call (i.), the impressions made on him by the contemplation of the almond tree (the "early-riser") and the boiling kettle turned to the north. In each case, the thought of some simple event suddenly raises the veil which separates the every-day world from the world of spiritual issues, and behind the ordering of the one, as of the other, the prophet feels the direct action of God. The same

thing may be said of the visit of Hanamel (xxxii.). The other feature is seen in what may be called Jeremiah's colloquies with God. These occur for the most part between chs. xii. and xx. They have nothing to do with prophecy proper. Jeremiah reveals himself expostulating with Jehovah in private, and receiving replies which, however stern and harsh to our ears, are received by him as authentic answers to his complaints. In ch. xiv. 19-22, for example, the prophet identifies himself with the miseries of the nation, and passionately implores Jehovah's mercy on the sinners. But the prayer is followed (xv.) by a stern refusal to have pity. In ch. xx., after an account of the night which he had spent in the stocks, he turns on Jehovah and complains that he has been "beguiled" (vers. 7 ff.), yet he cannot but continue to speak in Jehovah's name, and then, as if with a sudden sharpening of his agony, he ends the "colloquies," as he had begun them, with a bitter curse on the day of his birth.

It is impossible to date these *cris du cœur* ; for them, Jeremiah supplies none of the help that he, or Baruch, gives us for many of the incidents which they record. But the references to "plots" among his own kinsmen date them in a period when such plots might be expected ; and that might well be in the "silent" years, when his earlier attitude to the centralising reforms would clash with the interests of the priestly families in the country. And we can only guess at the date of what is to many readers the most interesting part of his prophecies ; the prediction of the exiles' return and the gift of the new covenant (xxx., xxxi.). These two chapters collect into a single document, a kind of "book of consolation," what were probably a number of independent oracles. Here Jeremiah appears to be thinking as much of the

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exiles from the old Northern Kingdom (carried away in 721) as of his own southern province. He describes their old home mourning for them, their journey across the desert, and the delighted surprise of their "mother" as she sees them approaching. He then passes (xxx. 31 ff.), though possibly after a considerable interval of time, to the prophecy of the "new covenant"—quoted almost entire in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and surely in the mind of our Lord at the Last Supper—written, not like the Decalogue (reaffirmed and expanded in the legislation of 621) on blocks of stone, but on the heart; such a covenant could not but be kept, and it would indeed be the culmination of the gracious purpose of Jehovah to His people. This, it must be confessed, is so different from the general tone of Jeremiah's addresses, and so difficult to fit in with what we know of his later life, that it is tempting to place it also in the "silent" interval—towards the end, perhaps, when he had become convinced that the reforms were useless, and looked instead to a divine revelation.

It will thus be seen that the main critical problem suggested by the book so far has been its arrangement in something like chronological order. It may be indeed that several oracles have been added by subsequent editors; and in particular, many scholars have urged that much of ch. xxx. is later; but, save for some single brief passages, the grounds for removing these prophecies are confessedly subjective, and such scholars are far from being unanimous. Yet there is one group about which there can be little doubt, viz., the prophecies dealing with foreign nations, which are collected into chs. xlv.—li., and which appear in the Greek translation of the book after xxv. 13. Several of these,

and notably the long poem on the fall of Babylon, are alien not only to the style but to the general outlook of Jeremiah. Some of them, indeed, may well have a Jeremianic nucleus; when isolated prophecies were written down as they occurred, or handed on from mouth to mouth, such working up as this implies is natural and would be almost inevitable. But in the case of chs. l., li., the fall of Babylon is imminent or even past, and Babylon is regarded, not (as Jeremiah always regarded it) as the instrument of Jehovah's plan, to which it was the duty of Judah to submit, but as the foe of Jehovah, whose doom was the outcome of His righteous vengeance. At no period of Jeremiah's work could we imagine that (save at the cost of the gravest inconsistency) he could have taken up this attitude; and of inconsistency of this kind he nowhere gives a hint.

How then did the book, so curiously chaotic at present, come to be compiled? First would come Baruch's roll, in 605, containing many of the prophecies previously produced (or their substance); other prophecies remained for the time distinct. Then Baruch wrote his memoirs of his friend, in prose, with notes of some other addresses. Probably after the Exile these three sections, the roll, the other prophecies, and Baruch's memoirs, were put together, but in an order of the compiler's own, with no trace of any careful historical sense. From this document were formed two descendants, one of them treated much more freely, in the matter of expansions and modifications, than the other. This difference can be clearly seen in the Greek version, the Septuagint, which is shorter by about one-eighth than the version which is translated in our Bibles. But to both of them is added the

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section dealing with foreign nations, though to the longer recension it is added almost at the end, and to the shorter it is inserted at what seemed an appropriate place in the middle (xxv. 13). The book is thus no anthology, like our Isaiah ; and however it has been enlarged and disarranged, the central figure still stands out as the most appealing, and the most majestic, of the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

What, then, of his contribution to the message of that fellowship ? Part of their burden was his : the announcement of speedy and ruthless destruction as the punishment of incorrigible disobedience, and the advent of a deliverer, though to Jeremiah this deliverer is no coming military or royal potentate, but a " branch " or " scion " (xxiii. 5 ff.), whose methods were to be as peaceful as his aim. But Jeremiah went beyond the others in his sovereign conception of the inwardness of religion, his own consciousness of a kind of personal intimacy with Jehovah, and the stress which he laid, not on some externally renewed society, but on a society where the very spirit of genuine obedience to God should dominate alike the activities of society itself and the personal life of the individual. If he gives us no passage as sublime as Isaiah liii., he has gone far to picture for us the essentials of the Kingdom of God.

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THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

BY W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

THE arrangement of the Book of Ezekiel offers an almost complete contrast to that of his predecessor. Instead of a number of detached oracles, in a far from chronological order, we have for the most part a series of connected and elaborate discourses, with dates carefully prefixed to many of them, and following one another (with two or at most three exceptions, xxvi. 1, xxix. 17, xxxiii. 21) in the historical order. On the other hand, the arrangement is not only chronological, but symmetrical. The book falls naturally into two halves, at the exact middle (ch. xxiv.), the first of which is almost wholly destructive, and the second as markedly constructive. It is even possible to detect a distinct psychological progress of thought in the first half; while in the second there are three clear divisions (against the nations, chs. xxv.—xxxii., the moral and spiritual restoration of Israel and its deliverance from all external dangers, chs. xxxiii.—xxxix., and the new religious cultus, chs. xl.—xlviii.) which certainly follow a recognisable order of thought. It would seem not only that Ezekiel had the mind and instincts of an author, but that his conception of his message was steadily developing and deepening throughout his career.

Against this it has been argued, in a far more drastic fashion than has been applied to Jeremiah, that only a comparatively small part of the book really is due to Ezekiel at all. For if the book seems to fall into two halves, it is equally clear that there are two sides to the nature of its author. There is, it is urged, the fiery and realistic (see ch. xvi.) denouncer of the idolatry

and debauchery of the nation, the genuine successor of Amos and Jeremiah ; and there is also the priestly legislator, whose ideal of religion is cultural holiness in altar and temple. Assuming that these two attitudes could not be found in the same individual, the "genuine" Ezekiel of the sixth century is responsible at best for the nucleus of some twenty-five chapters, and all the rest is due to a sacerdotal reformer of the fifth century.

There is doubtless force in this psychological argument ; but it is always dangerous to say what could or could not have happened in this world of the mind ; and all Hebrew literature shows that the familiar distinction between priest and prophet must not be exaggerated. If the prophetic ideal stands for morality, and the priestly for cultus, the former is found in the Hebrew codes of law (Decalogue, Deuteronomy, and "Holiness") ; and Jeremiah himself was a priest. It may be that the prophets at times speak of cultus as if it had no religious significance ; but only in the latest code of law (the "Priests'") is conduct neglected. We must indeed admit that the text of Ezekiel has been expanded and modified, like that of Jeremiah ; there are obvious doublets and misplacements, and (to mention another parallel to Jeremiah) the Massoretic text (represented in our translation) is much less terse and vigorous than the text used by the Greek translators. But these considerations have to do with the text, and not with the author. There is no true parallel here to the three main sections in the Book of Isaiah ; and it is safer to see in our prophet one who was in substantial harmony with the ideals of Deuteronomy, the book which is generally recognised as in the main identical with the document on which the religious reformation of Josiah was founded.

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The dates affixed to Ezekiel's prophecies make it clear that he was carried to Mesopotamia by the Babylonians after their first siege of Jerusalem, with the larger number of the more aristocratic citizens. It was in exile that he received his call. At first his thoughts were fixed on the home that he had left, and the glaring evils which were bringing ruin upon it. It is these which he denounces with all the fire of his passionate nature in the first half of the book. Here he goes further than Isaiah or Jeremiah ; there never was a time, even in the desert, when Israel was not wholly corrupt. But, in 586, when the city is fallen, he begins to look elsewhere ; first at the surrounding nations (chiefly Egypt and Tyre ; like Jeremiah, he has no word to say against Babylon), and next at Israel, destined to be purified by her sufferings, then to be restored, and to receive a new spirit of repentance and of loathing for the past. The field is thus cleared for Ezekiel's other interest, cultus and the law. When the nation is back in its own land, and filled with the new spirit of Jehovah, it will need a worship and a temple in which its devotion can be expressed. This is described in the form of a vision. The temple, of which we have very detailed and often very puzzling measurements, is clearly suggested in its general form and appearance by the old temple of Solomon ; the structural differences introduced are either to preserve a meticulous symmetry of form, or to obviate the possibility of the pagan debasements of other days. And from the temple and its construction, the prophet passes on to a re-ordering and mapping out of the territory of the nation, which is so symmetrical that all merely geographical considerations are entirely neglected.

For the history of Hebrew religion, Ezekiel is

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more important as a priest than as a prophet. He stands midway between Deuteronomy and the Priests' Code. Less elaborate than the latter, he yet makes greater demands on the ritual devotion and liberality of the people than the former. Apart from one or two later and harmonising additions, Ezekiel comes nearest to the "Holiness Code" (Lev. xvii.—xxvi.); and a study of the later chapters of his book will show clearly that Hebrew law was not one definite and unchanging body of rules, given on Sinai or anywhere else, but a set of principles and their applications, changing and developing through the whole life of the nation.

One last point must be noticed: the psychic character of very much that Ezekiel tells us about himself. His description of his call, far more elaborate than that of any other prophet, has all the characteristics of a complicated vision (curiously enough, repeated, see chs. i., iii., x.), and many of the experiences of his earlier ministry—both what he saw by a kind of "second sight" in Jerusalem, and what he found himself doing at his own home by the Chebar—suggest the circumstances of a trance. It would be too much to suggest, as some have done, that the prophet was a cataleptic; his mind was far too vigorous; but while he exhibits to an almost abnormal degree the psychical peculiarities of Hebrew prophecy, in his emphasis on the importance of the due ritual and spiritual worship of Jehovah, he may well be called the father of later Judaism.

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THE BOOK OF DANIEL

BY W. F. LOFTHOUSE, D.D.

ALTHOUGH classed in our English usage as one of the four major prophets, Daniel does not appear, in the Hebrew Bible, as a prophet at all. The book occurs in that part of the Hebrew Scriptures which is known as the "Sacred Writings." His book's place in our Bibles is owing to the period in which Daniel is said to have lived, in the exile of the sixth century. But it does not follow from this that the book was written then; nor is the character of its contents that of prophecy. The first half of the book (chs. i.—vi.) is a collection of stories about the great Hebrew captive whose staunch loyalty to his ancestral worship made him conspicuous at the Babylonian court; the second is a collection of visions of the last things, couched in symbolical or intentionally ambiguous language, foreign to the prophets but common to what is known as "apocalyptic." It is true that in the later prophetic writings, predictions and descriptions of the end of the age occur; but the dominant note of all the prophets, denunciation of the sins of the prophet's own age, and the promise of deliverance consequent on or resulting in a change of heart, is entirely absent.

When looked at more closely, these stories can hardly be regarded as written by a contemporary of the events they relate. They are full of inaccuracies which would be impossible for one who knew the times at first hand. For instance, Belshazzar was not the last king of Babylon, nor was there any person "Darius the Mede" who captured the city. Nor could the actions attributed to Nebuchadnezzar have well occurred

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without leaving some mark on the historical records of his reign. Further, while part of the book is written in Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Near East of that and later periods, words occur which could have found their way into either Hebrew or Aramaic only after the rise of Greek influence.

On the other hand, the visions all refer to the ages after Daniel is said to have lived ; for the most part to the period after the death of Alexander the Great, when the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria were constant rivals, and Palestine was their natural battle-ground. References to historical events can be traced as far as the latter part of the first half of the second century before Christ ; then they cease, and the end of all things is regarded as coming. It is not unnatural to suspect that the author selected this period because his knowledge stopped there ; and the view is strengthened when it is remembered that the period coincides with the great Maccabean struggle, when the demands of Antiochus Epiphanes on the Jews seemed likely to make an end of Jewish religion altogether unless they were met by the most desperate resistance.

Read with this in view, both parts of the book become completely intelligible. The author first takes a number of heroic stories (how far they are founded on actual tradition, it is impossible to say) to show that loyalty, up to the point of martyrdom, will always be rewarded ; and he then gives several interpretations of recent and more or less familiar history, couched in what became the traditional imagery of this class of writing, to show that the nation was on the eve, not of destruction, but of a glorious vindication of her liberty and piety. It is true that the stories show some knowledge of Babylonian antiquities, though the only

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other reference to Daniel in the Bible (Ezek. xiv. 14, 20) suggests that Daniel lived at the latest some time *before* the Exile ; and the later chapters, when regarded as a figurative transcript of history as known to a Jew of second-century Palestine, have a distinct value for the historian. But if the book is referred to a time shortly after 167 B.C., the date of the latest event identifiable, it ceases to be a record of miracles quite alien to God's general way of governing His world or supporting His servants, and of a knowledge of the future which we should rightly regard, not as prophecy but as remarkable clairvoyance ; and it becomes the utterance of a faith in God which, while confusing what is to us the distinction between historical truth and imagination, is an enduring and ever-needed example of courage and unswerving devotion to conscience and its Lord.

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